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LESSONS

Latin Bass

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO AFRO-CUBAN AND BRAZILIAN STYLES

by George Lopez & David Hoff

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Introduction

As the diverse cultures of the world have continued to blend together, the results have become very apparent in music. Though each ethnic style has distinct characteristics, contemporary musicians combine styles from many cultures as they develop a sound. Much of today's popular music is greatly influenced by Latin music. The general term "Latin music" is used to describe ethnic music which originated from Africa and developed stylistically in Cuba, the Caribbean, and the countries of South America. Each has a very specific bass feel. As a bass player, it is important to become familiar with these feels. **Latin Bass** gives you this opportunity. Learn the differences between a *bossa nova*, a *mambo* and a *cha cha cha*. Find out how to play a *nanigo*, and much more. Each style is examined and demonstrated. Get hands-on experience as you play along with the compact disc included in the book.

About This Book

In order to demonstrate a wide spectrum of Latin bass playing, this book covers ten styles. Each style includes a brief introduction, an example or two of the basic groove, and a play-along song. All songs feature a full band on the compact disc. The bass lines are notated just as they are played on the CD. There are two mixes (versions) of each song; the first includes the bass, and the second does not. After you learn the written bass part, you may choose to create your own lines. This is highly encouraged, as it will help in the learning process.

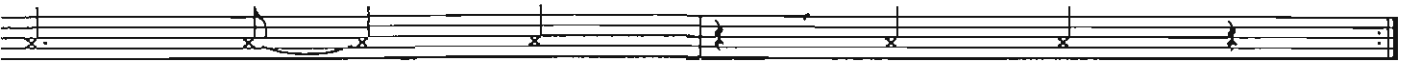
In addition, for each style there is a short list of artists we recommend for listening. This is only a fraction of the available material, but if you want to learn more about Latin, check out these musicians!

The styles are divided into two groups. The first group is Afro-Cuban, traditions coming from the Caribbean and Cuba. These styles are *mambo, cha cha, bolero, nanigo, songo,* and *merengue.* The second group is Brazilian, and consists of *samba, bossa nova* (4/4 and 3/4), *baião,* and *partido alto.*

After studying the material from this book, you will have a fundamental understanding of the Latin bass style. Keep in mind that this is only the beginning. These styles evolved from numerous cultures and can only be fully understood by continued study. It is in your best interest to listen to as many recordings as possible to hear the complex variations that the musicians from these cultures use in their music. Keep practicing, listen to the records, and have fun!

Part One
Afro-Cuban

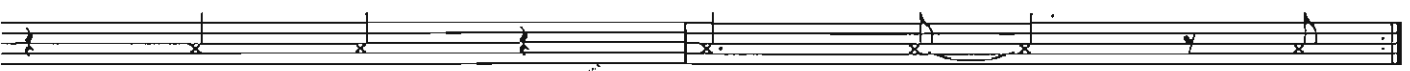
Fundamental to the Afro-Cuban style of music is a repetitive rhythmic pattern called the *clave*. This pattern is the guide for all instruments when creating a groove or melody. It may be played by a percussion instrument, or it may only be implied, but the musicians always feel it. Beginners of Latin music may find feeling the clave very difficult at first, but it will come with practice. Try playing the bass line and tapping the clave pattern with your foot until both are effortless and smooth. For the Afro-Cuban styles covered, three clave patterns are used. They are the *son clave,* the *rumba clave,* and the *6/8 clave*. The clave figures are:



son clave 3-2

son clave 2-3

rumba clave 3-2



rumba clave 2-3

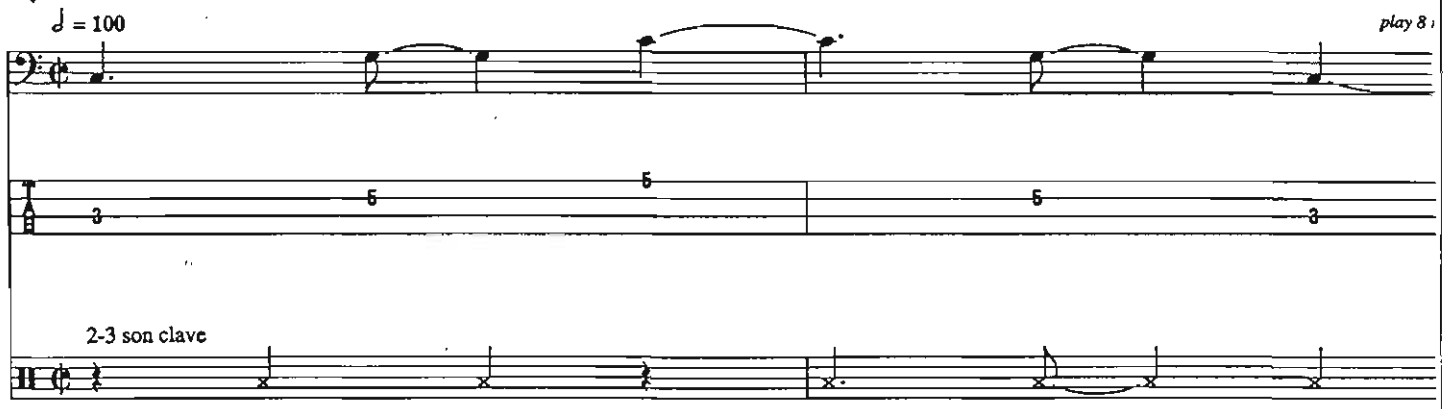
6/8 clave

Mambo

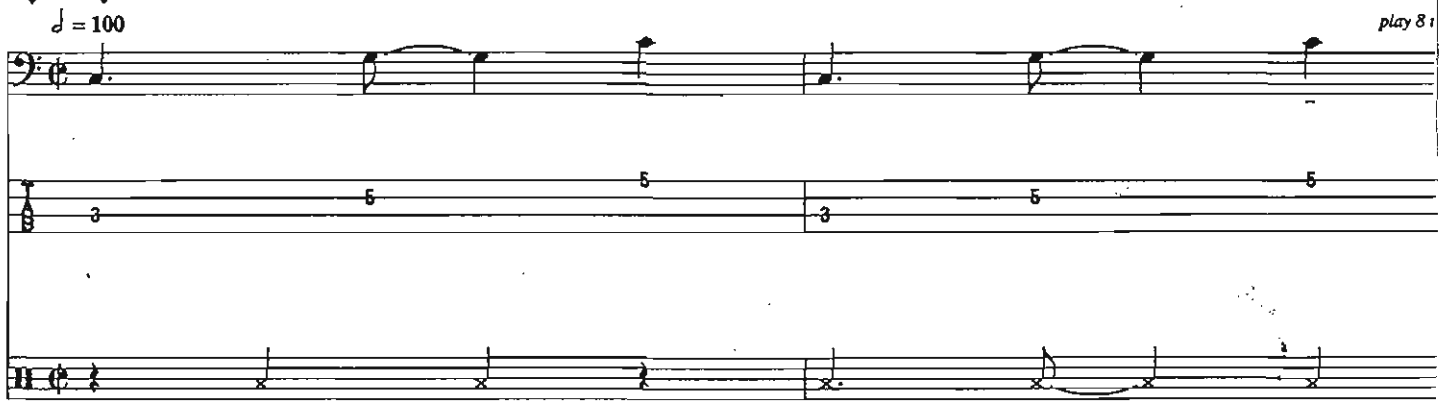
A popular song and dance form, the *mambo* comes from Cuba. The dance became very popular in the 1930s and 40s as it evolved from an earlier form called *danzon de nuevo ritmo* ("dance of the new rhythm").

Notice the variations of the bass pattern. The first is syncopated by anticipating the next measure, making it a more challenging feel to learn. The second pattern is straight because you always play on beat "one."

1



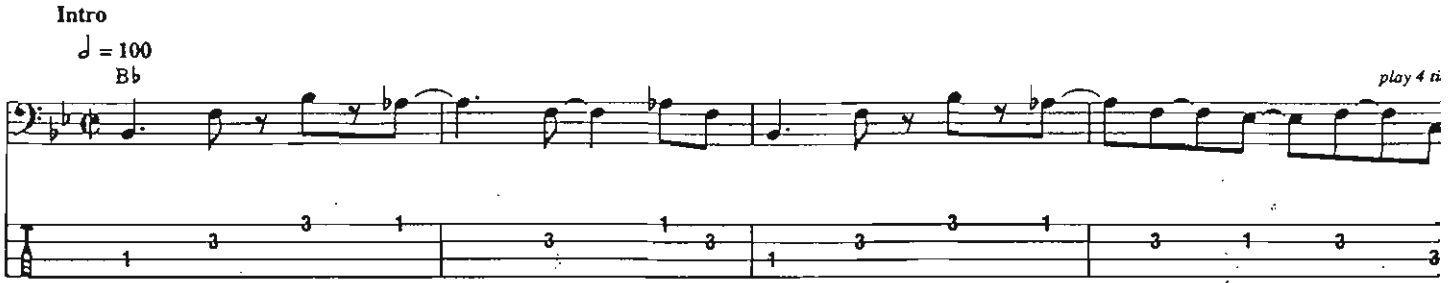
2 3

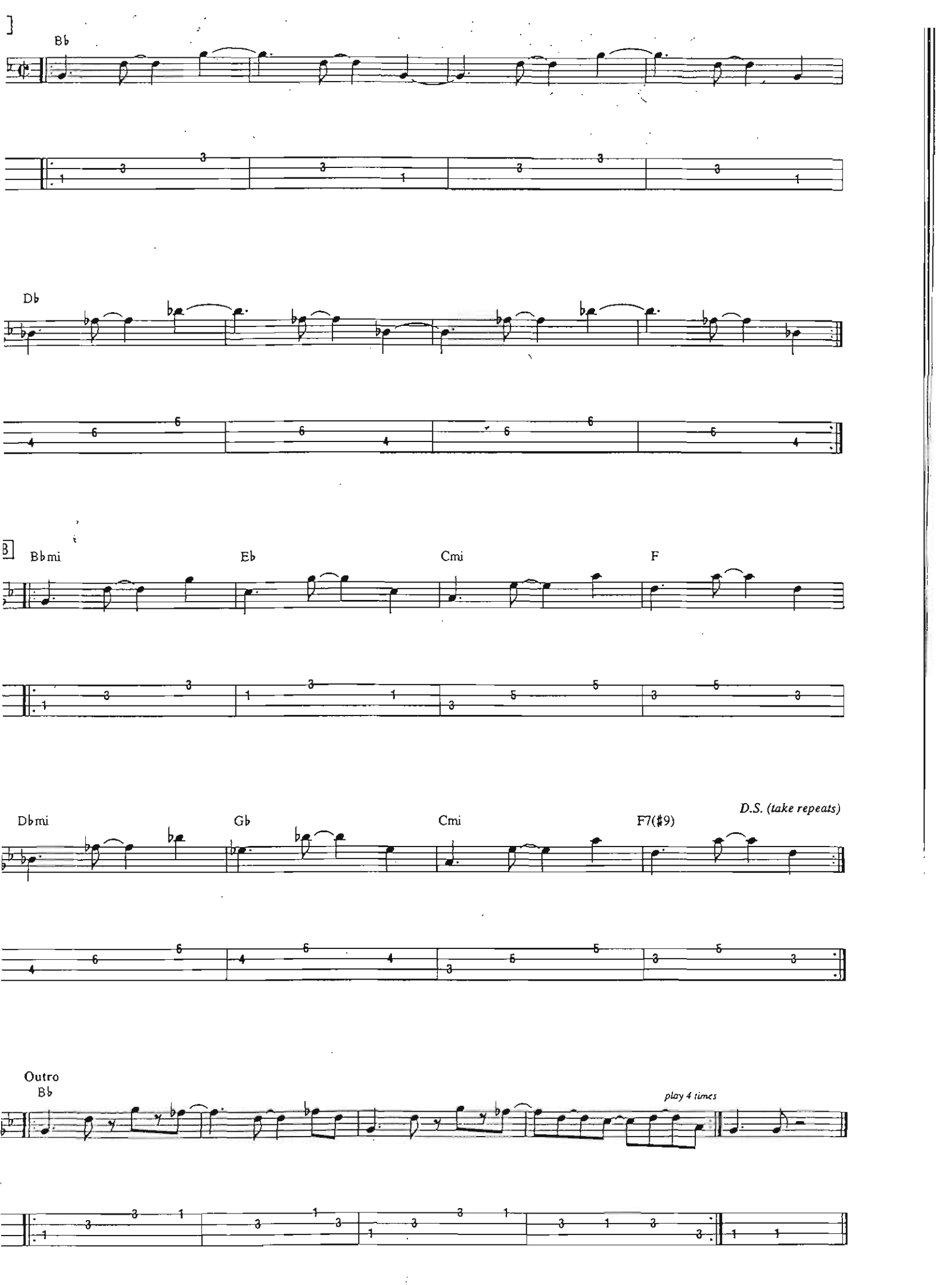


Suggested Listening:

Tito Puente
Eddie Palmieri

4 5 Song no. 1

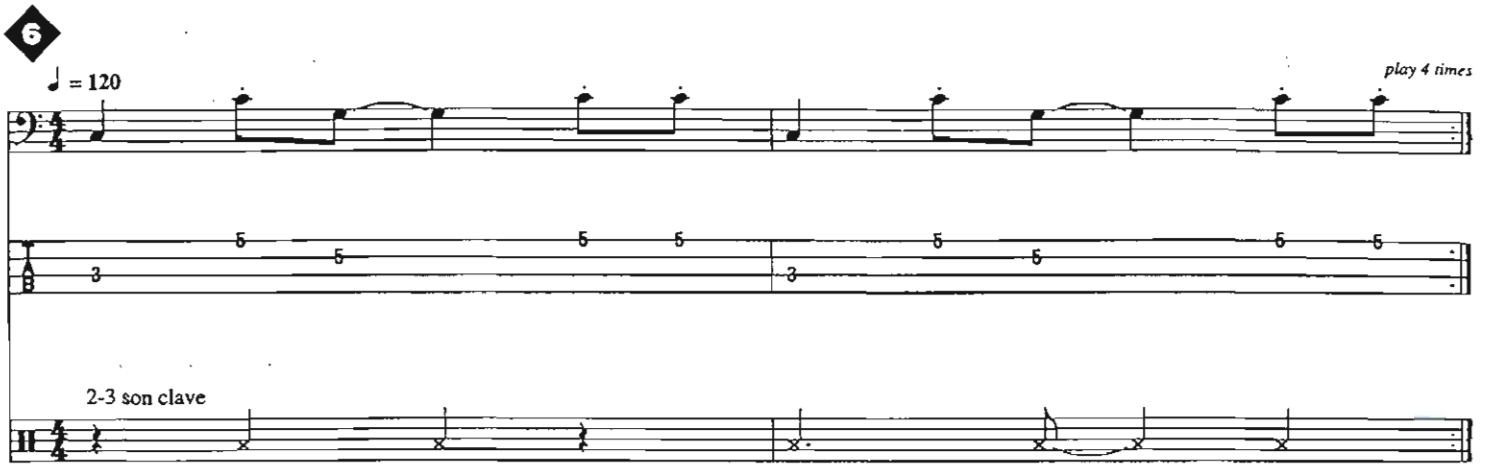


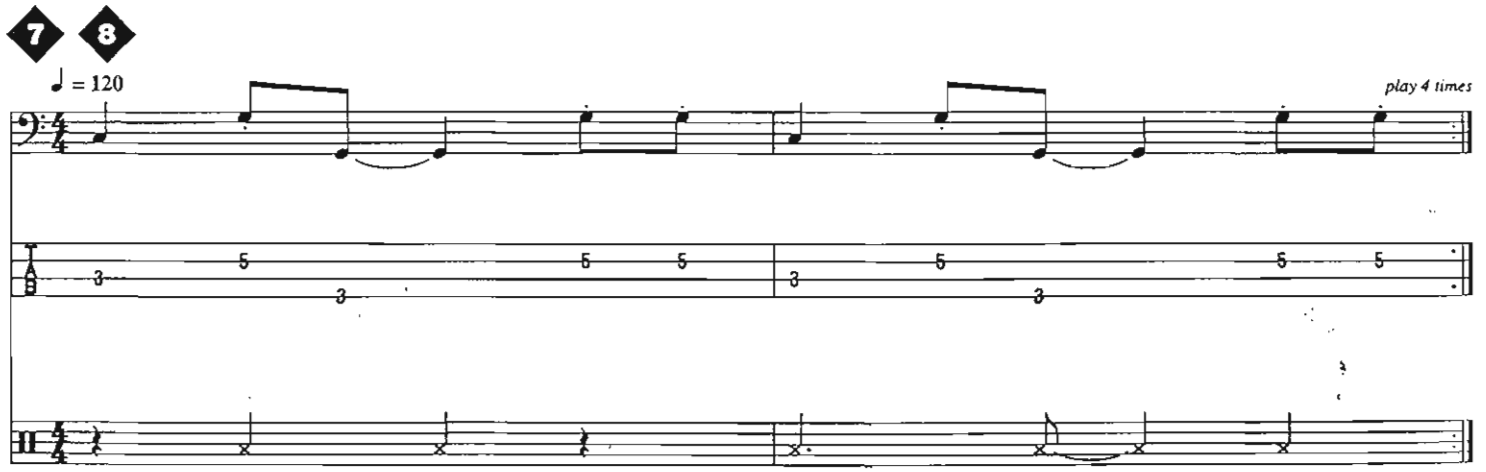

Bb
Db
B
Bbmi
Eb
Cmi
F
Dbmi
Gb
Cmi
F7(♯9)
D.S. (take repeats)
Outro
Bb
play 4 times

Cha Cha Cha

Cha cha cha also comes from Cuba, where it was popularized by violinist Enrique Jorrin in the 1950s. To this day, it is still a popular song and dance form.

The variations of this style involve different intervals using the same rhythm. The first pattern has a root-octave-fifth shape, while the second has a root-fifth-low fifth shape.

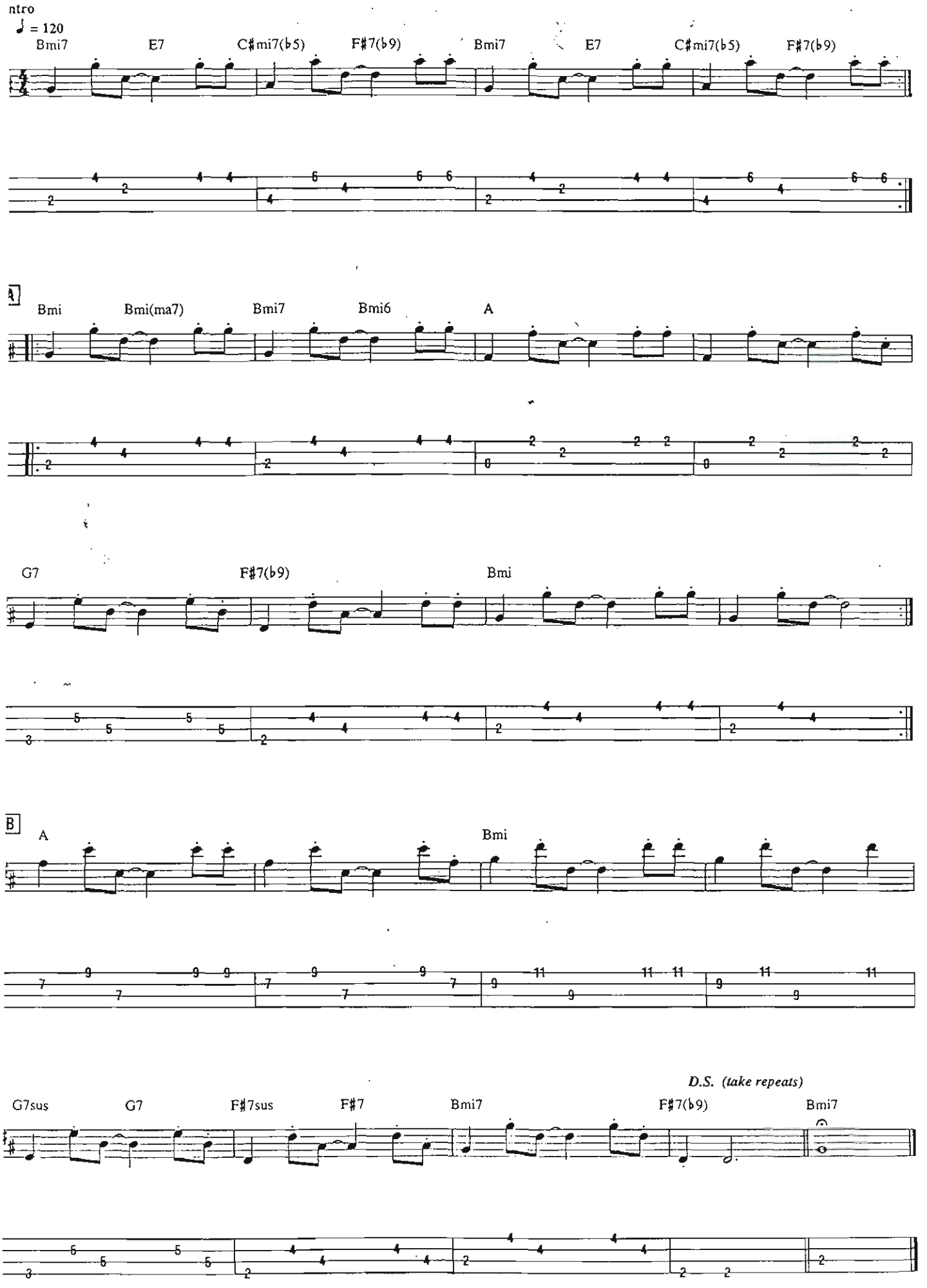




Suggested Listening:

Pancho Sanchez
Orquesta Aragon

9 10 Song no. 2


ntro
♩ = 120
Bmi7
E7
C♯mi7(♭5)
F♯7(♭9)
Bmi7
E7
C♯mi7(♭5)
F♯7(♭9)
A
Bmi
Bmi(ma7)
Bmi7
Bmi6
A
G7
F♯7(♭9)
Bmi
B
A
Bmi
D.S. (take repeats)
G7sus
G7
F♯7sus
F♯7
Bmi7
F♯7(♭9)
Bmi7

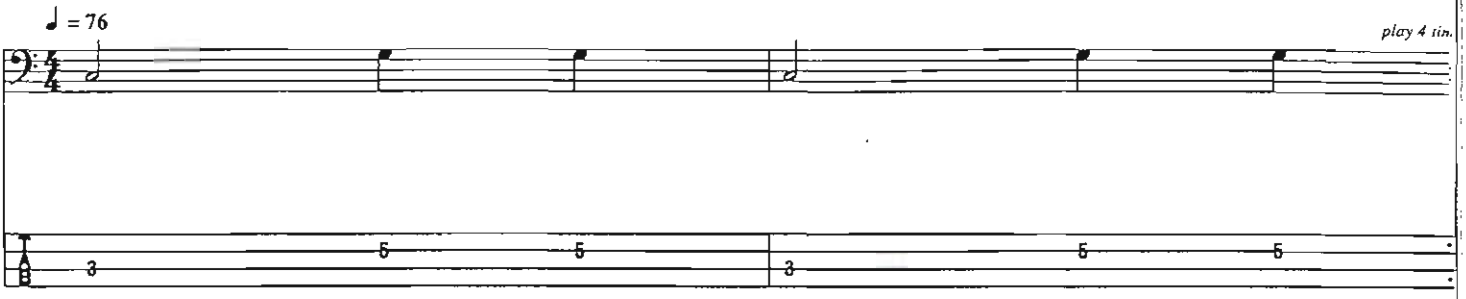
Bolero

Bolero is often called the "Spanish ballad." These are romantic songs, and the tempo is usually slow. The bass part is very simple. It is common to switch to a cha cha cha for the B section of this song form in order to add momentum to the groove. For purposes of this book, however, the bolero will be played through the entire song.

Although the bolero is very simple, it is possible to add subtle variations—but be careful not to lose the basic feel.

Because of the slow tempo, no clave figure is played.

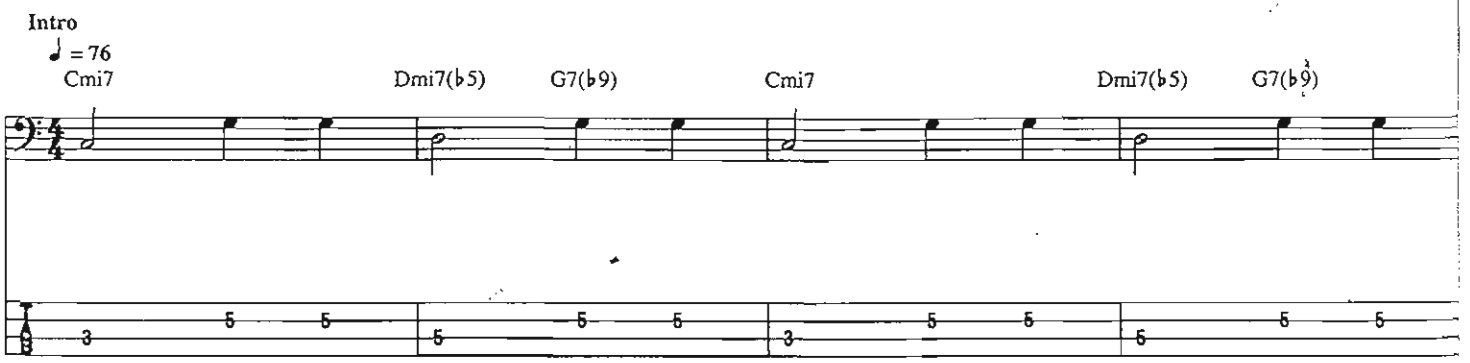
11 12

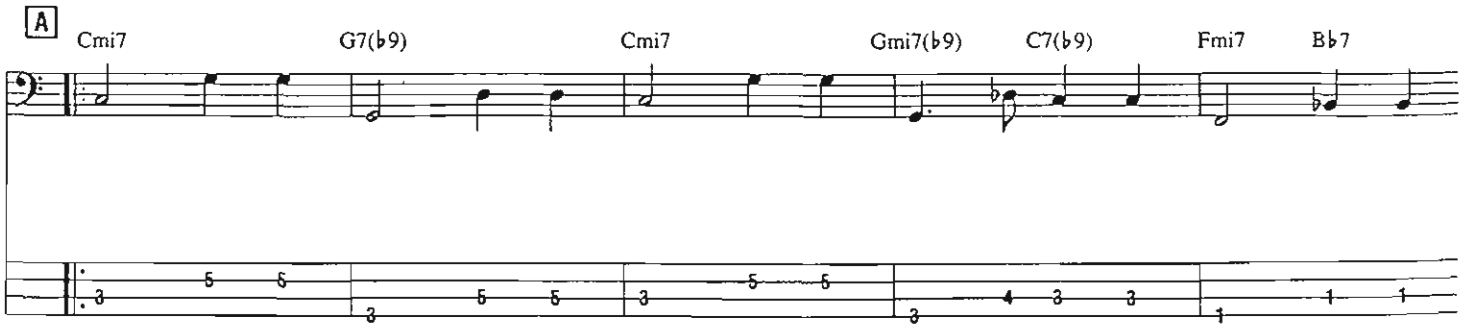


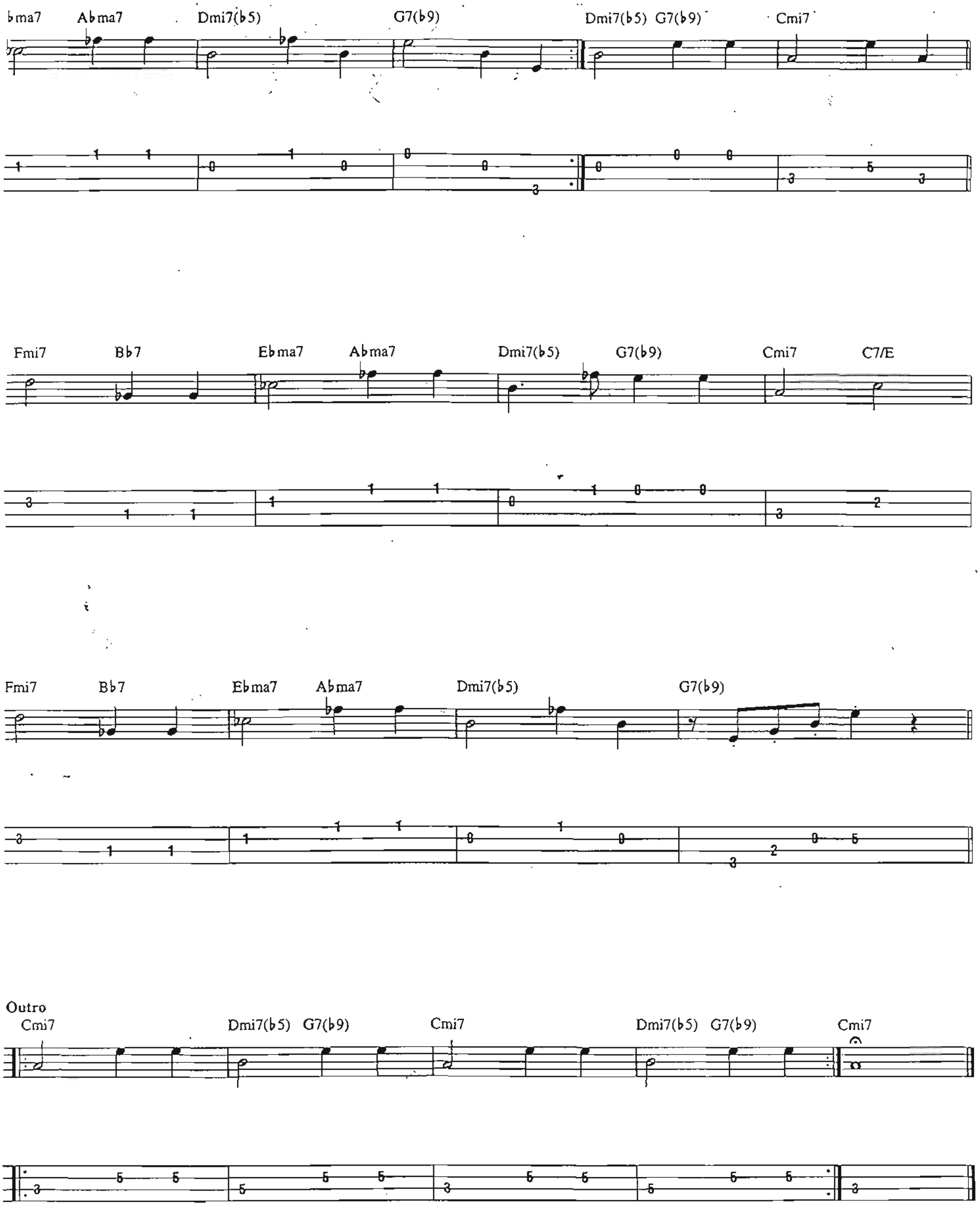
Suggested Listening:

Tito Rodriquez
Daniel Santos

13 14 Song no. 3





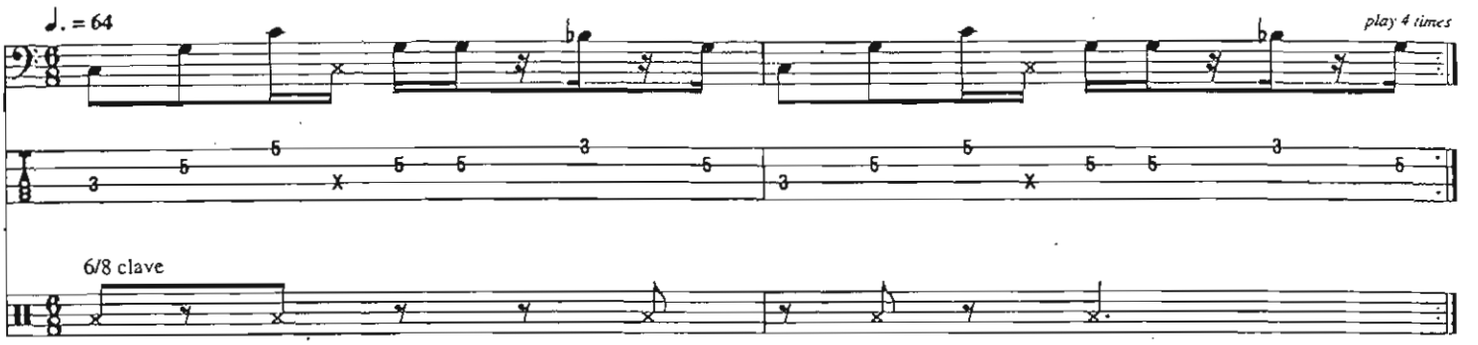

bma7 Abma7 Dmi7(b5) G7(b9) Dmi7(b5) G7(b9) Cmi7
Fmi7 Bb7 Ebma7 Abma7 Dmi7(b5) G7(b9) Cmi7 C7/E
Fmi7 Bb7 Ebma7 Abma7 Dmi7(b5) G7(b9)
Outro
Cmi7 Dmi7(b5) G7(b9) Cmi7 Dmi7(b5) G7(b9) Cmi7

Nanigo

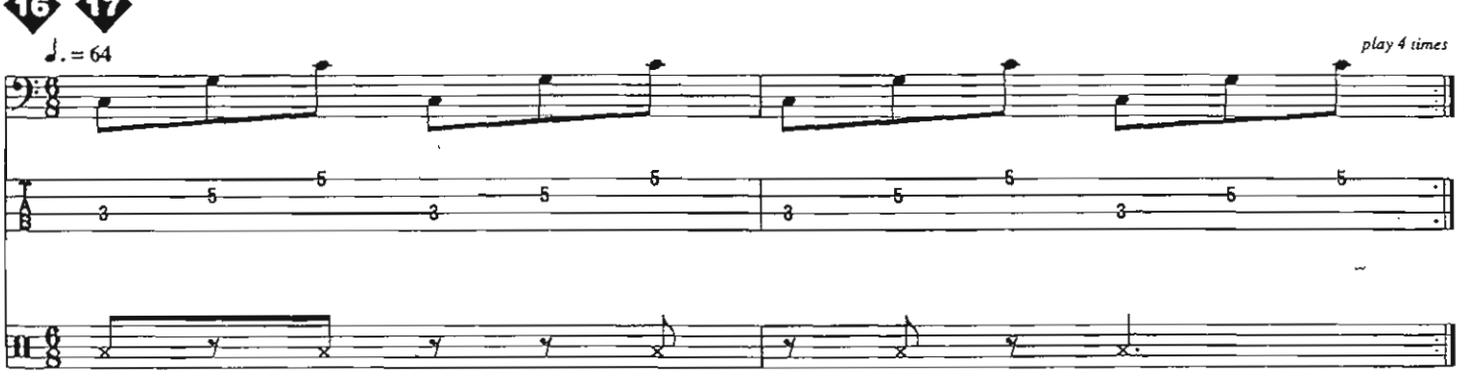
When Africans were brought to Cuba in the 1500s, people from the tribe called *Yoruba* brought with them rituals that included music consisting of the 6/8 rhythms that are called *nanigo*.

The syncopation of the first bass pattern makes it a very challenging feel. Although the second pattern becomes straight, keep it consistent and driving!

15



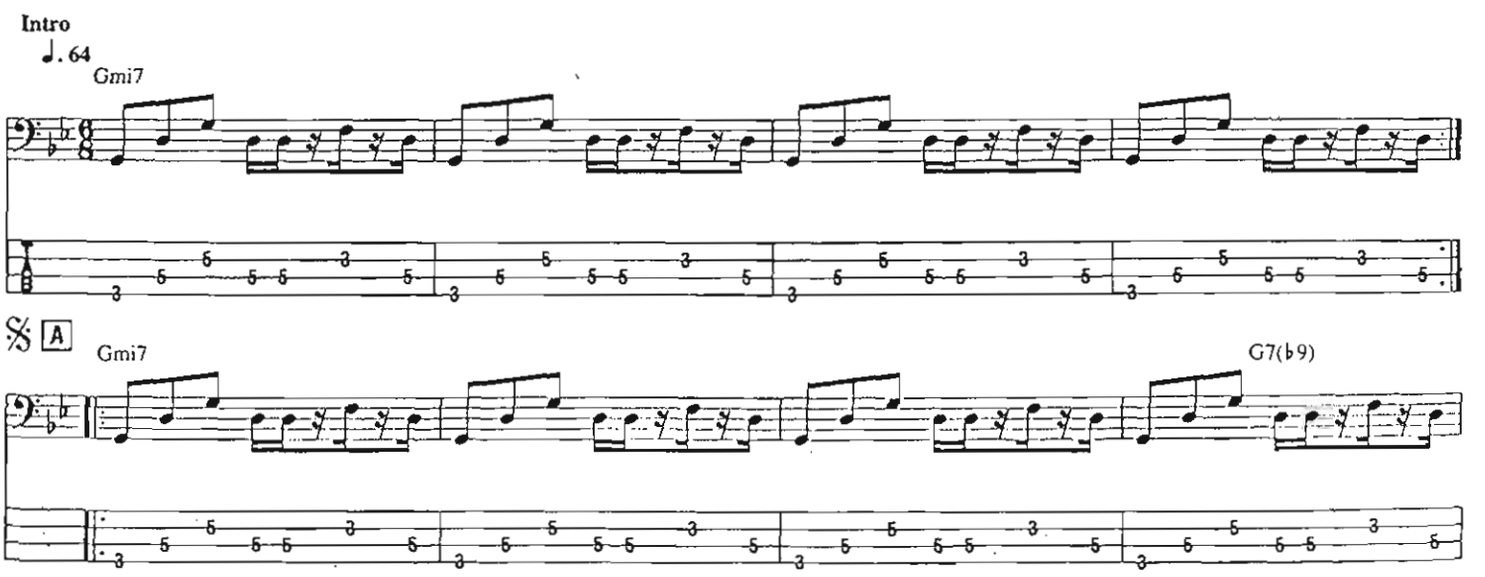
16 17

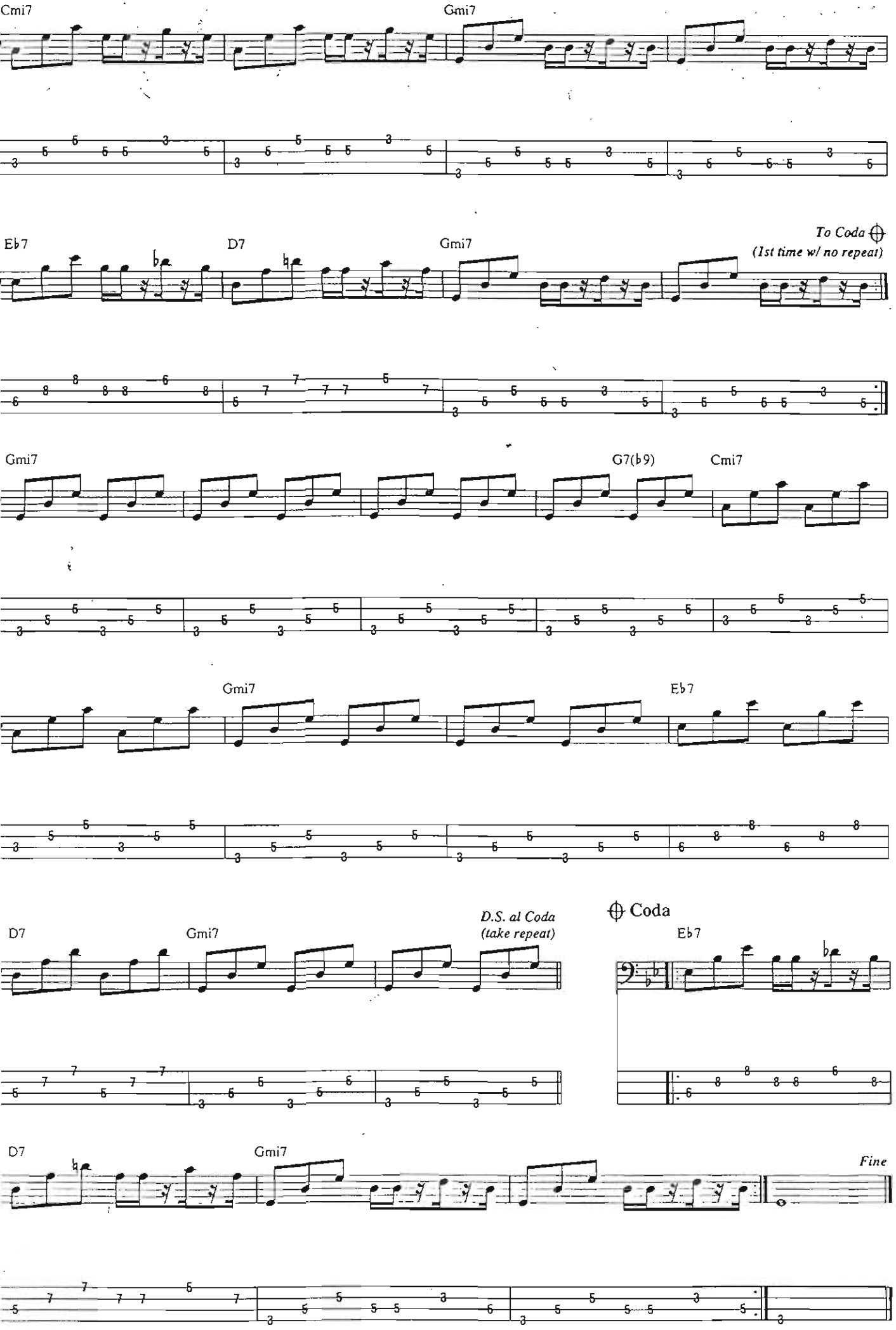


Suggested Listening:

Mongo Santamaria
Irakere

18 19 Song no. 4

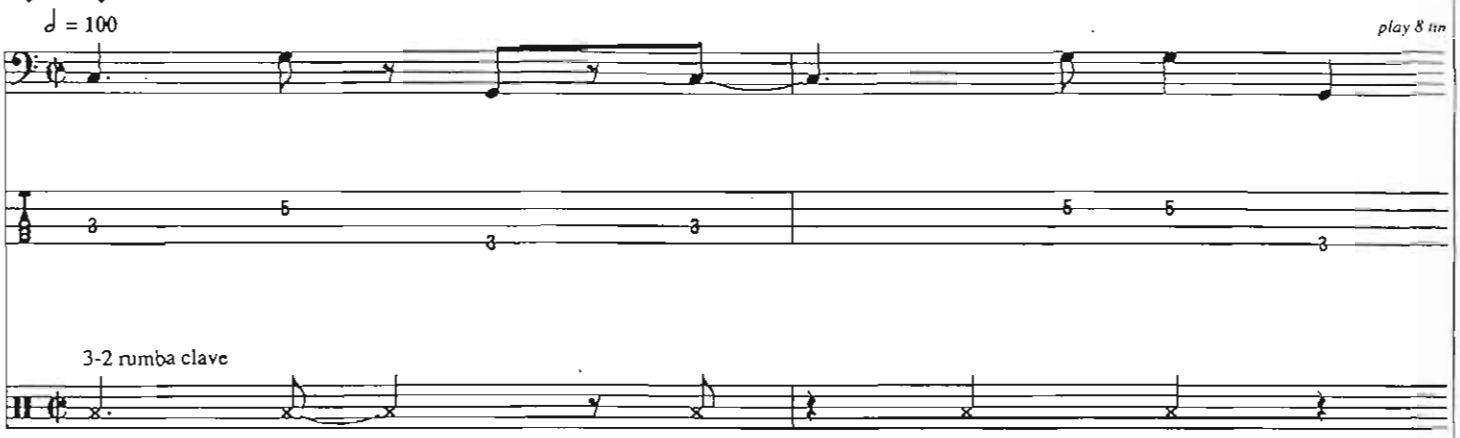



Cmi7
Gmi7
Eb7
D7
Gmi7
To Coda
(1st time w/ no repeat)
Gmi7
G7(b9)
Cmi7
Gmi7
Eb7
D7
Gmi7
D.S. al Coda
(take repeat)
Coda
Eb7
D7
Gmi7
Fine

Songo

Songo is a blend of the old and new styles of Cuba. It is seen as the style by which the drumset entered Cuban music. Elements of rock and funk are evident in the songo style. It is still one of the most popular of the Latin styles with American musicians.

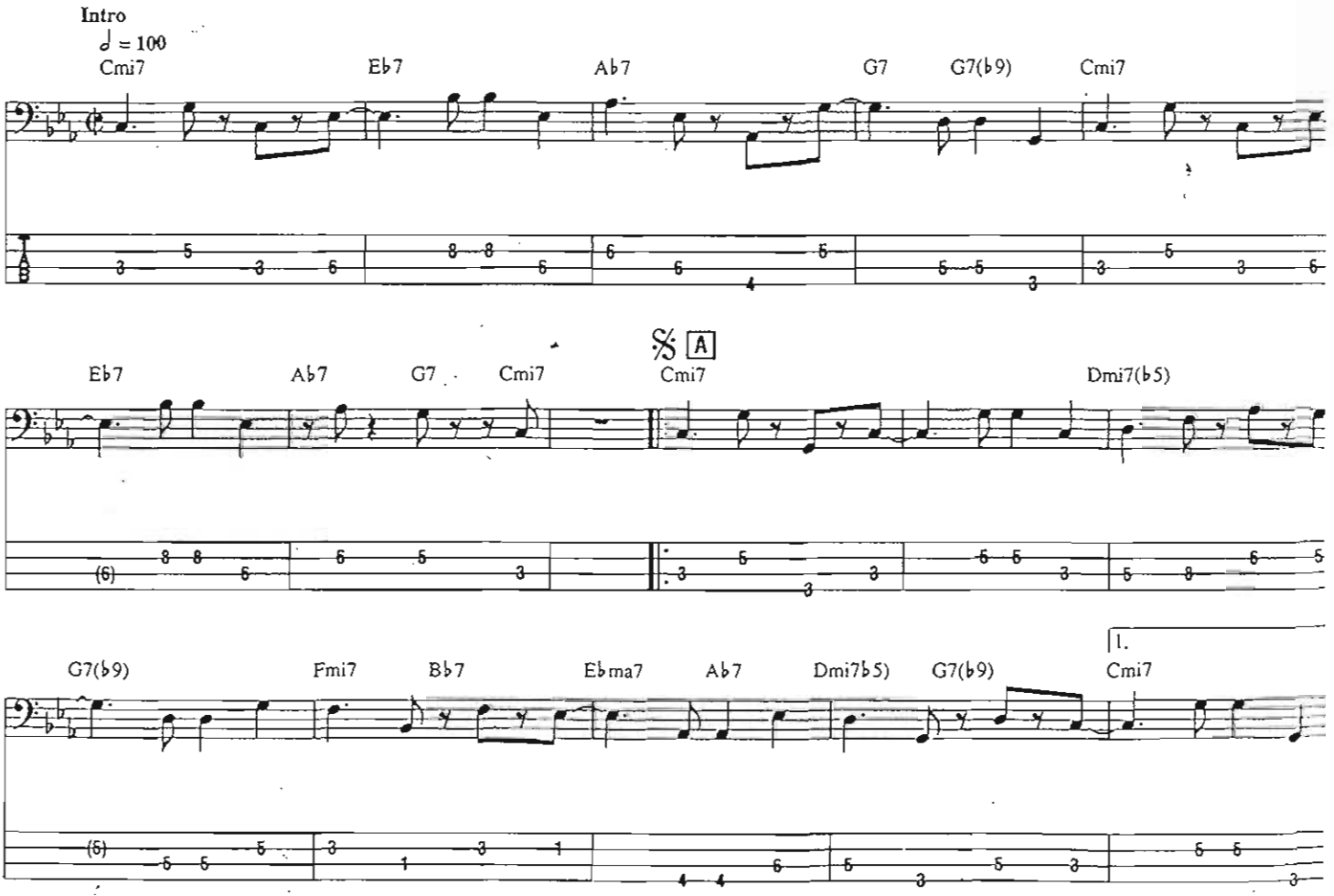
20 21

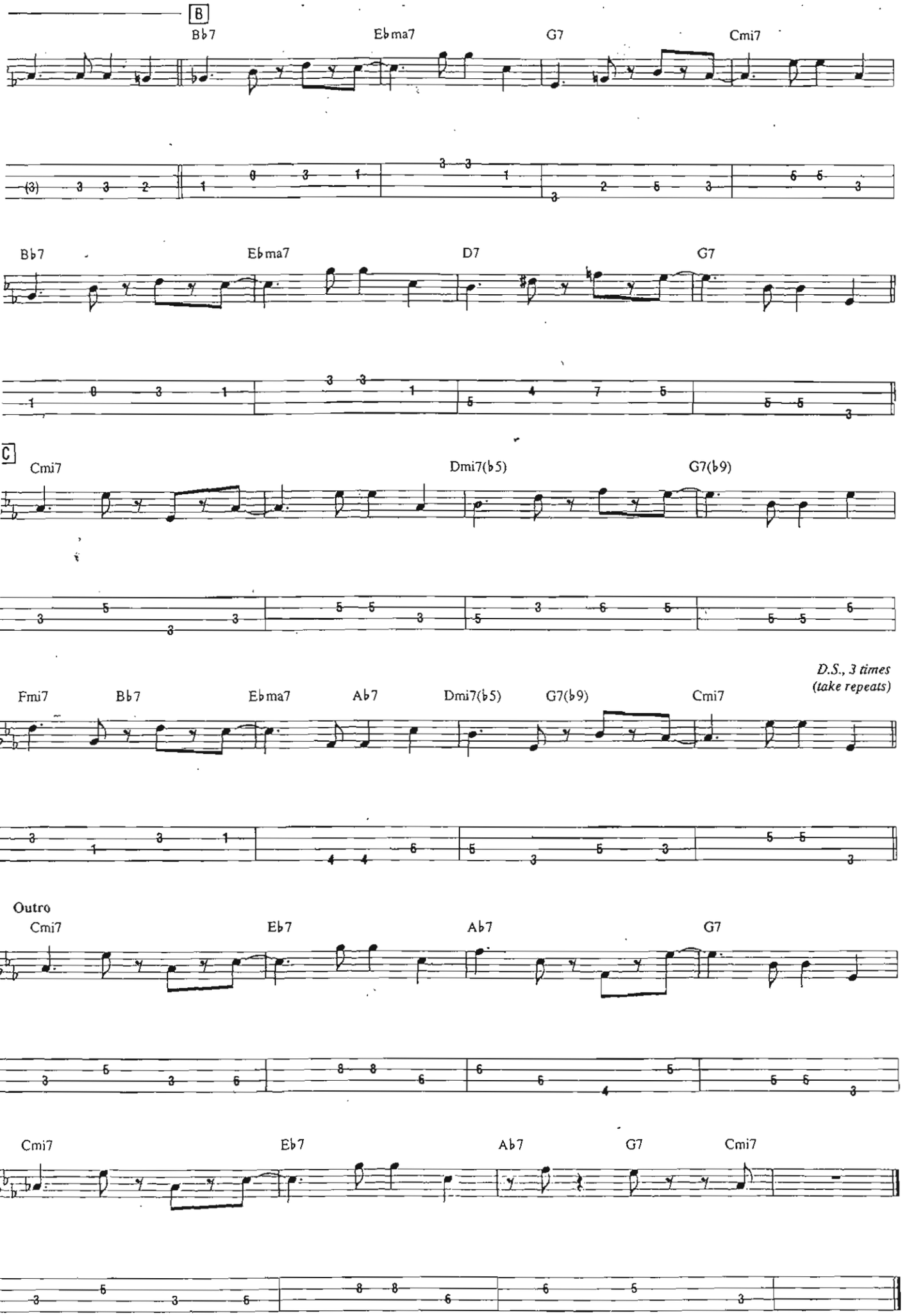


Suggested Listening:

Los Van Van
Batacumbele

22 23 Song no. 5



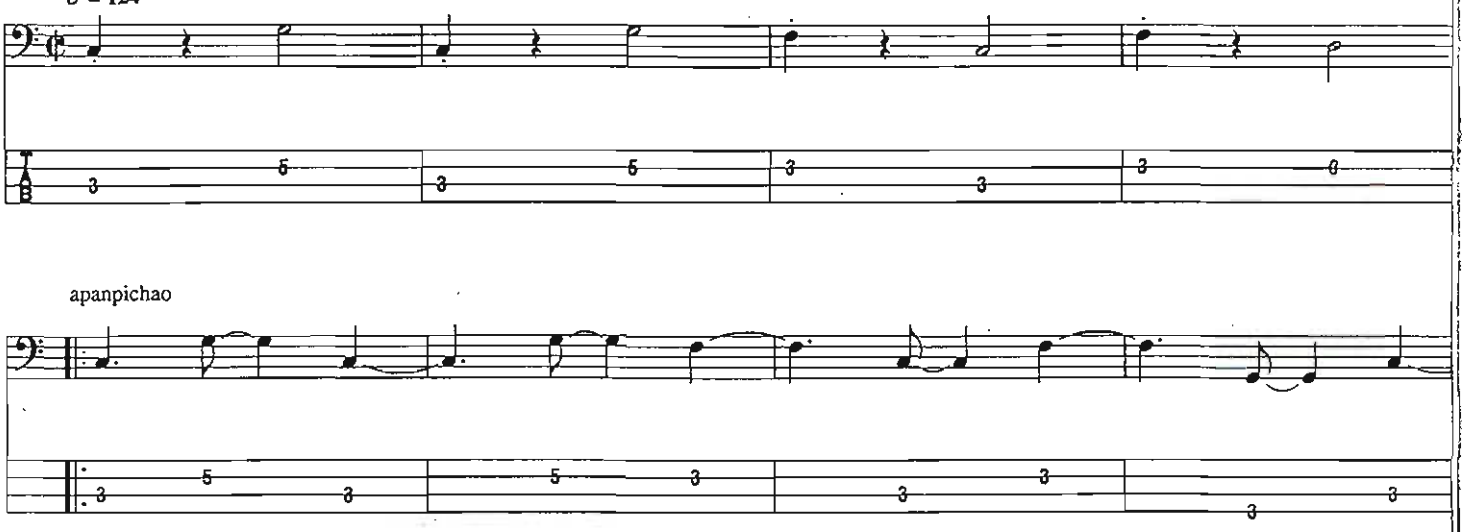

B
B♭7
E♭ma7
G7
Cmi7
B♭7
E♭ma7
D7
G7
C
Cmi7
Dmi7(♭5)
G7(♭9)
D.S., 3 times
(take repeats)
Fmi7
B♭7
E♭ma7
A♭7
Dmi7(♭5)
G7(♭9)
Cmi7
Outro
Cmi7
E♭7
A♭7
G7
Cmi7
E♭7
A♭7
G7
Cmi7

Merengue

This style comes from the Dominican Republic. The traditional *merengue* band was comprised of a four-string guitar (el cuatro), a metal guiro (guira), a two-headed drum called tambora, and the marimba. When the marimba is replaced with the electric bass, it is refered to as "merengue tipico moderno"

Check out the last section, where the bass alternates between the traditional merengue style and a more syncopated rhythm called *apanpichao*. There is no suggested clave for this style.

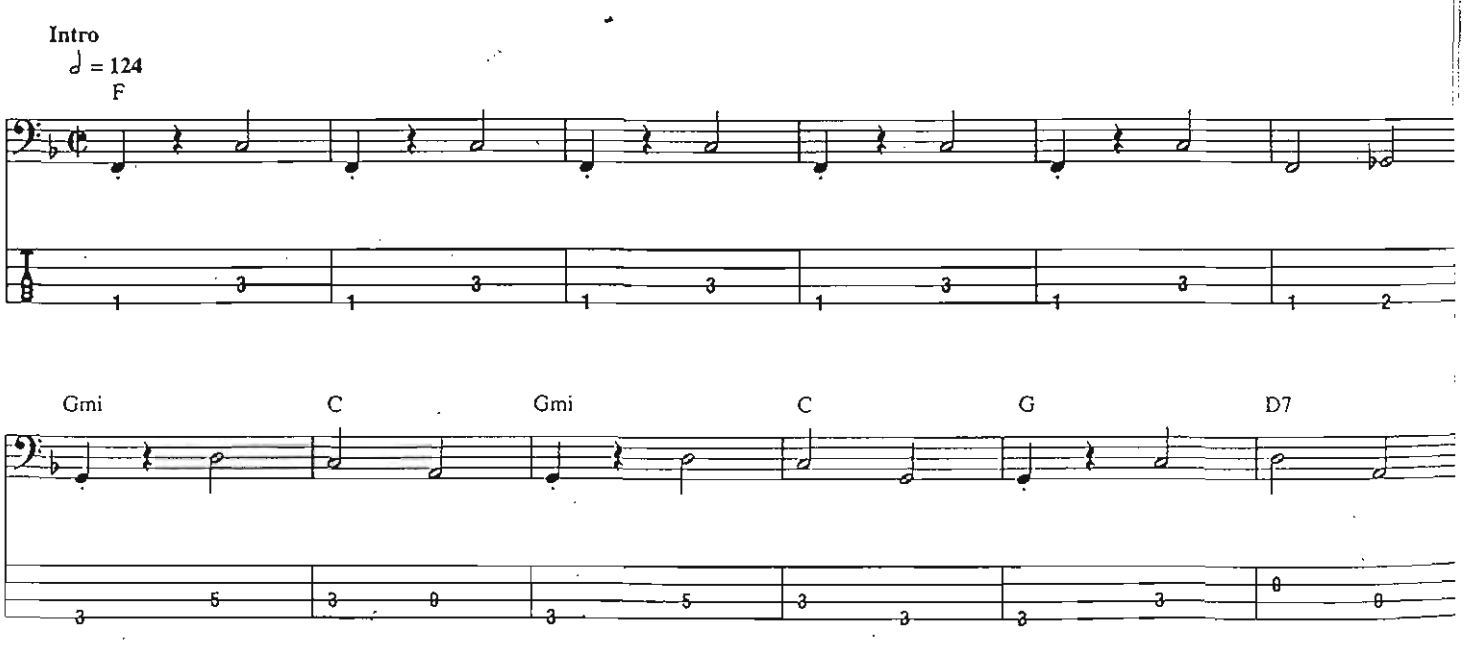
24 25

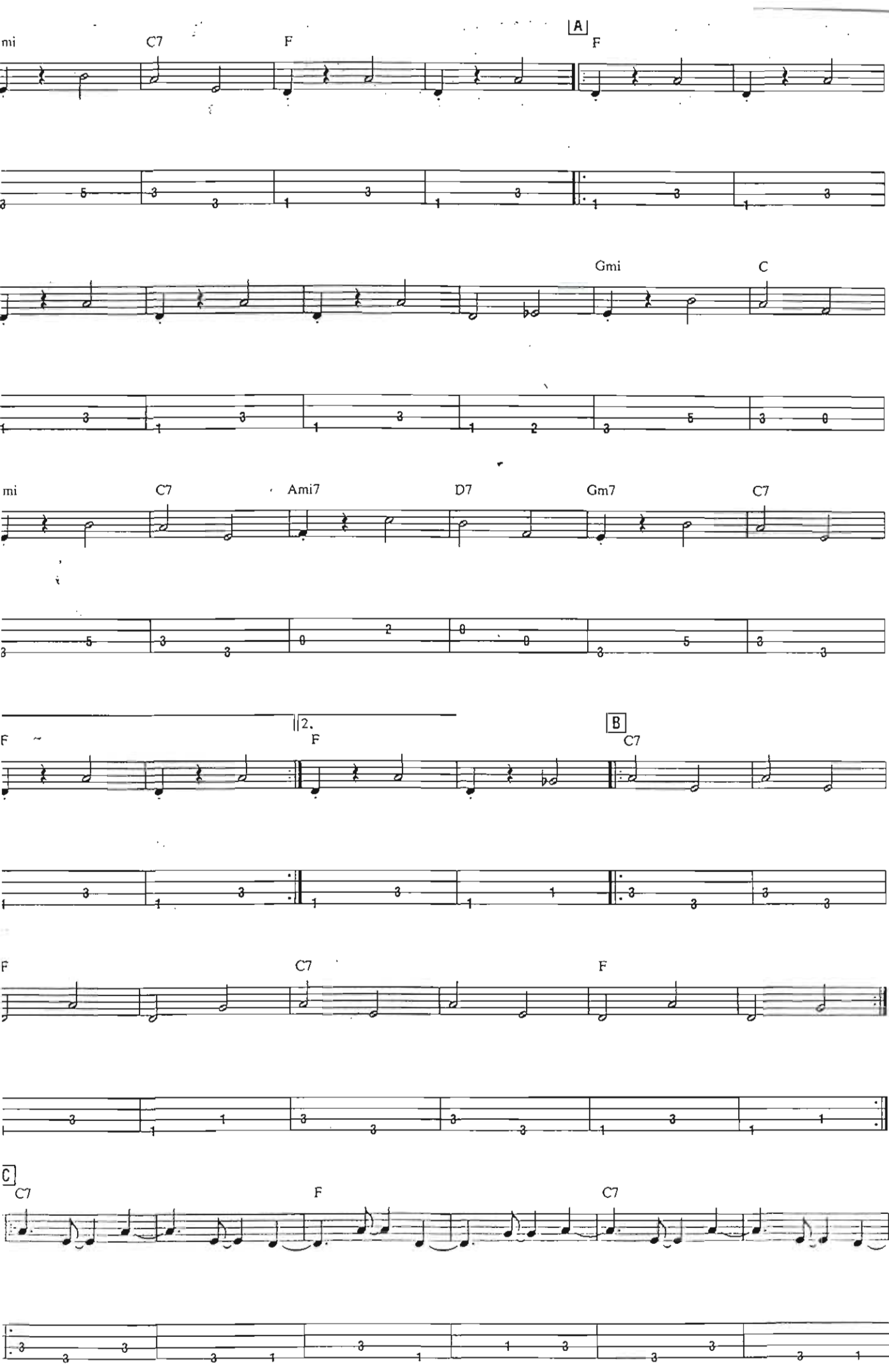


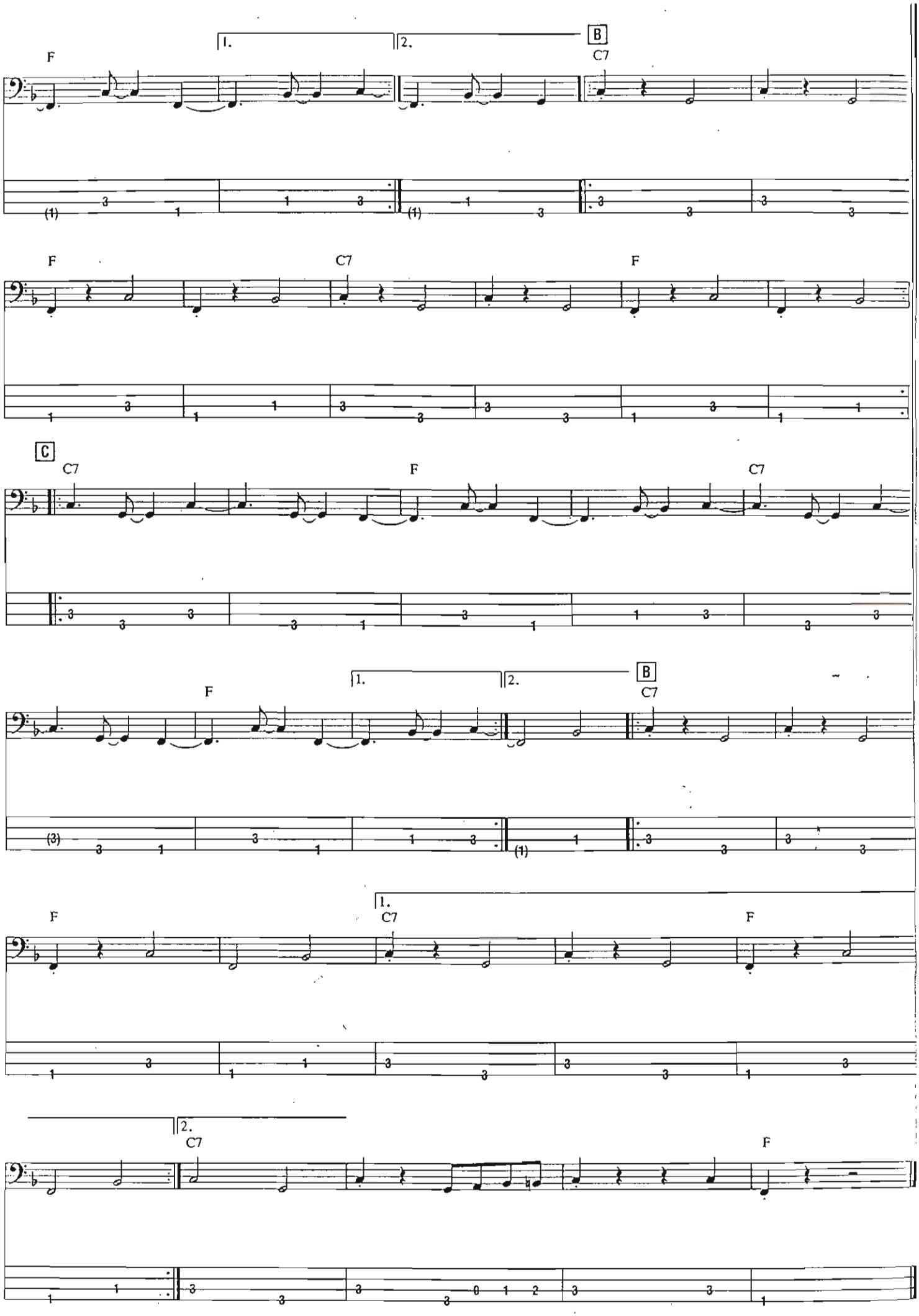
Suggested Listening:

Wilfredo Vargas
Johnny Ventura

26 27 Song no. 6



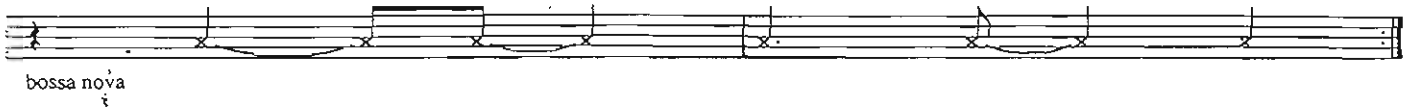

mi
C7
F
A
F
Gmi
C
mi
C7
Ami7
D7
Gm7
C7
F
2.
F
B
C7
F
C7
F
C
C7
F
C7


1.
2.
B
F
C7
F
C7
F
C
C7
F
C7
1.
2.
B
F
C7
F
1.
C7
F
2.
C7
F

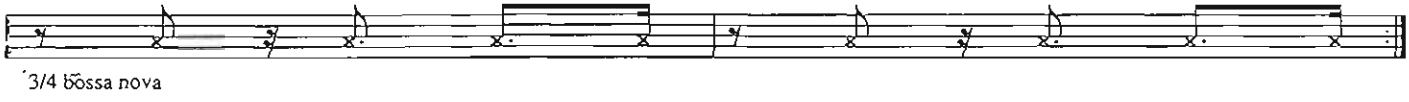
Part Two
Brazilian

For the Brazilian styles—*samba, bossa nova, partido alto,* and *baião*—each has a basic repetitive pattern that serves as a guide much like the Afro-Cuban clave. The appropriate pattern will be indicated for each style. These figures are:

samba

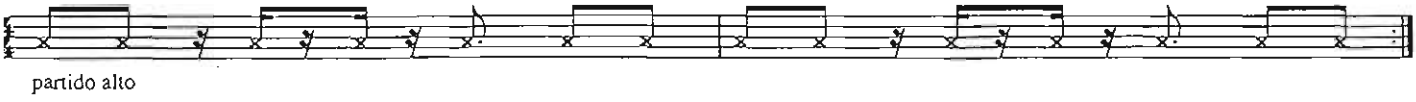


bossa nova



3/4 bossa nova

baião



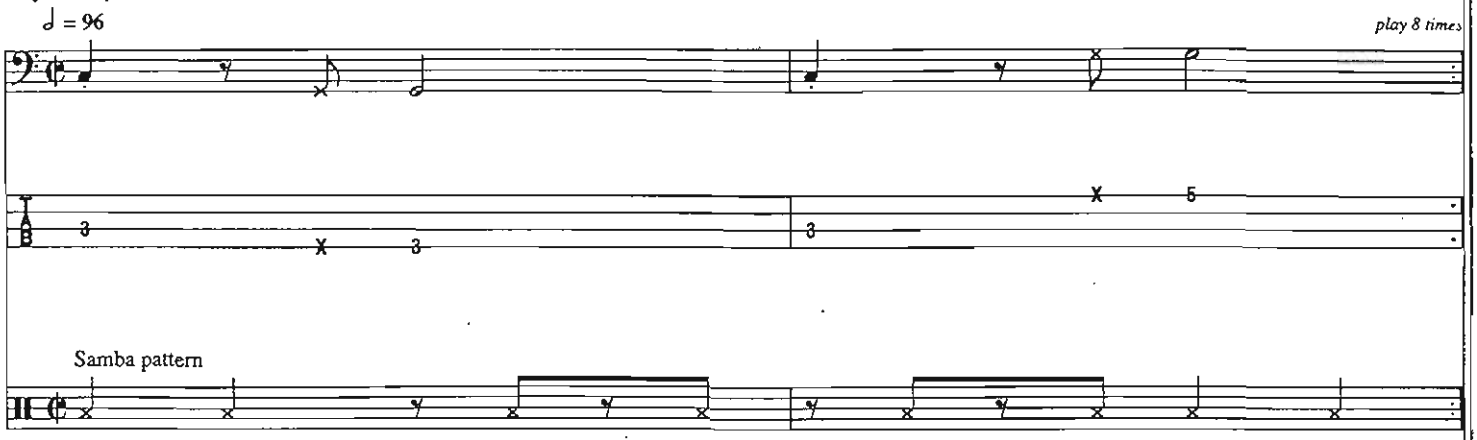
partido alto

Samba

There is not a more identifiable part of the Brazilian culture than the *samba*. Not just a musical style but also a dance form, samba is an integral part of the yearly celebration called Carnival. Samba schools (*escola de samba*), which are very common in Brazil, teach students percussion and dance as they prepare for the celebration. The bass part in a samba emulates the pattern that the surdo drum plays in a traditional samba band.

Like the bossa nova, this style is popular with jazz musicians. The samba is medium to fast in tempo and is usually felt in a two feel commonly called "cut time."

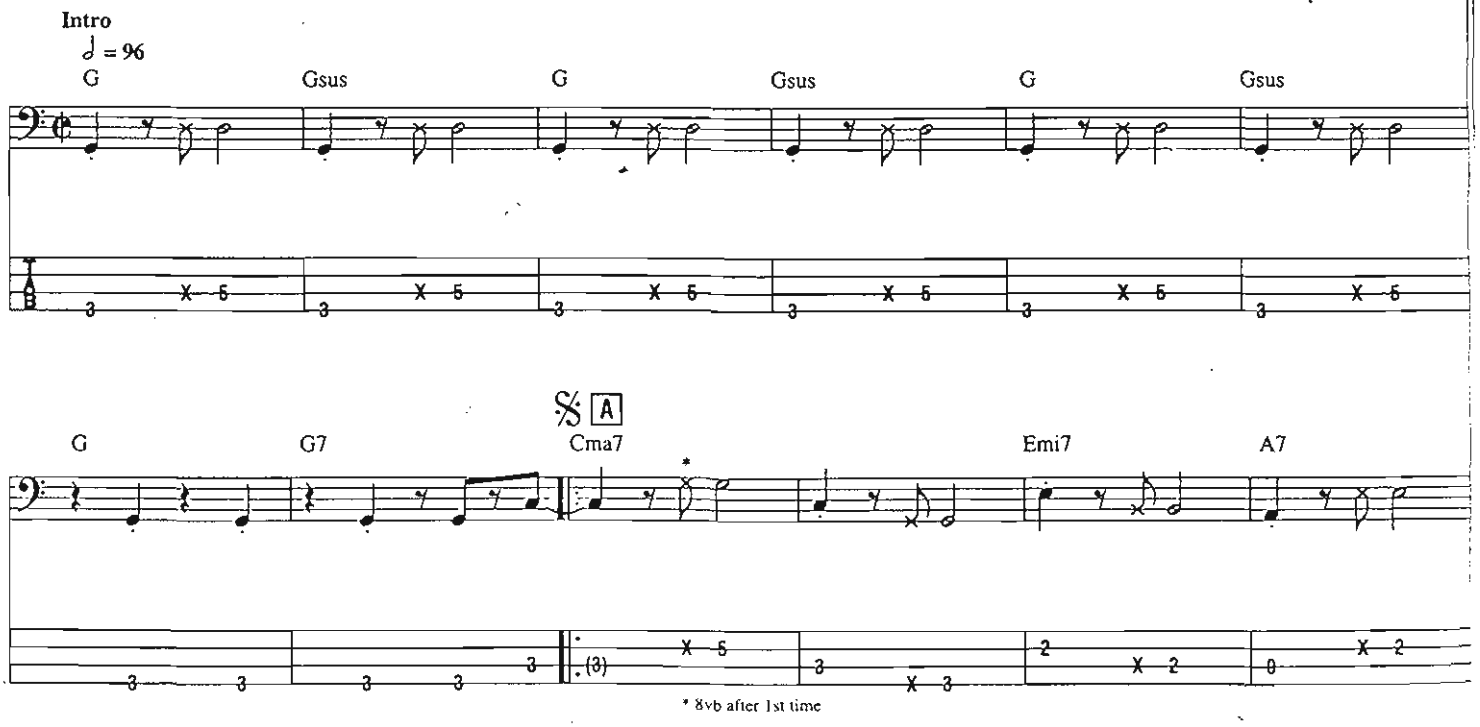
28 29

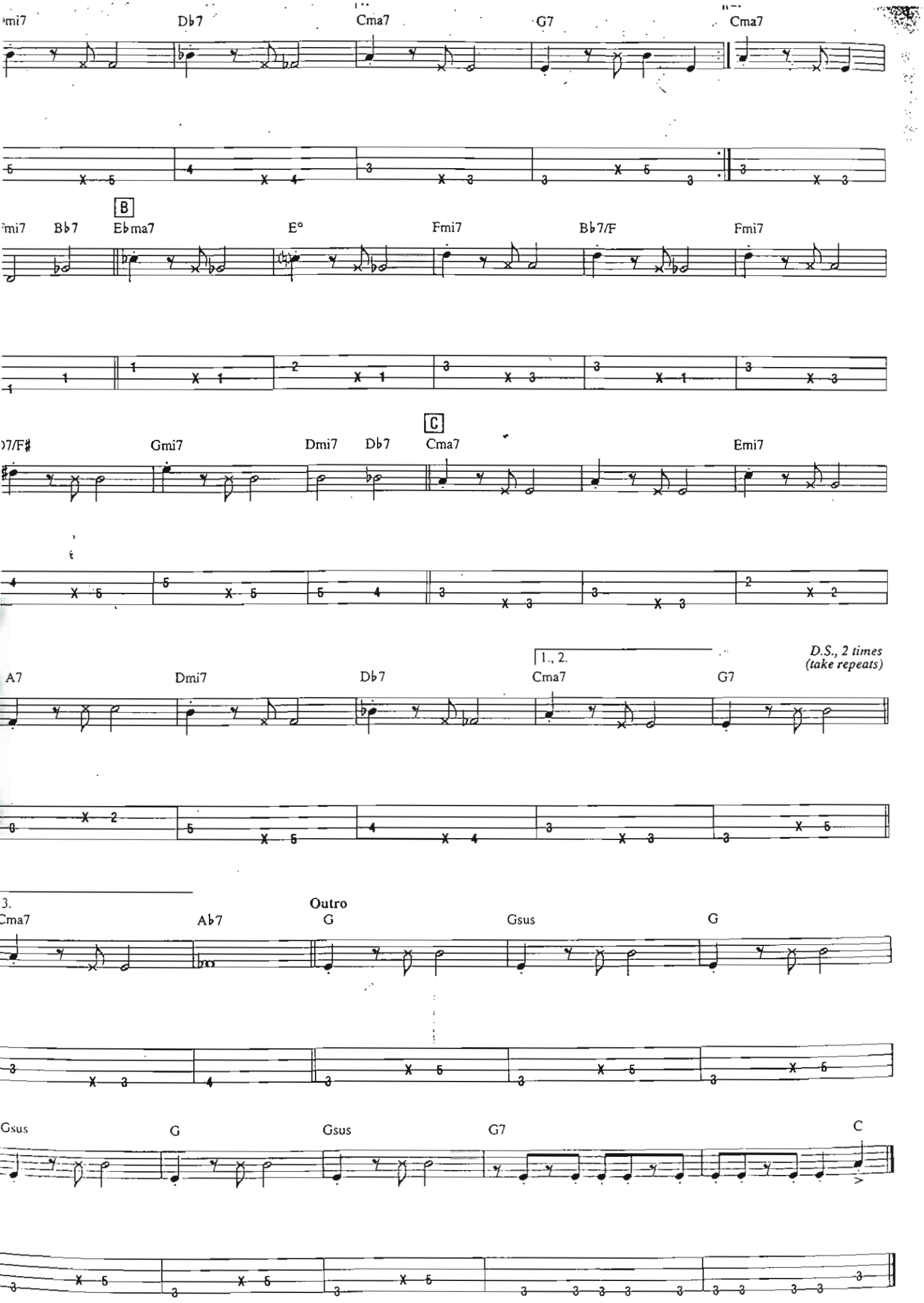


Suggested Listening:

Dori Caymmi
Martinho Da Vila

30 31 Song no. 7

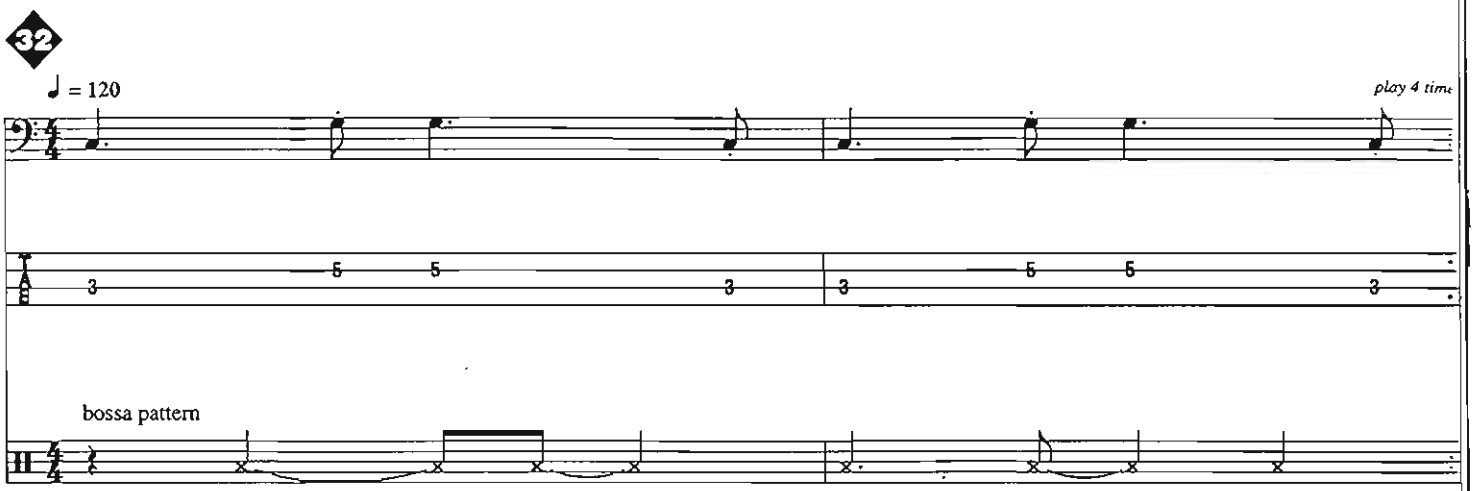


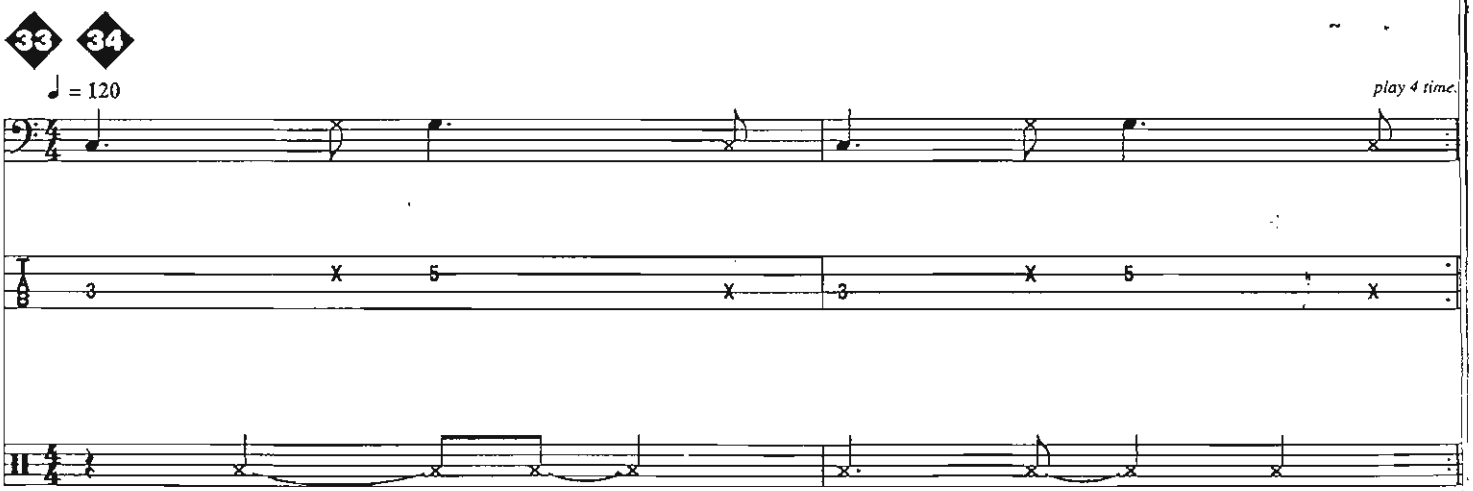

mi7
Db7
Cma7
G7
Cma7
B
mi7
Bb7
Eb ma7
E°
Fmi7
Bb7/F
Fmi7
C
)7/F#
Gmi7
Dmi7
Db7
Cma7
Emi7
A7
Dmi7
Db7
1., 2.
Cma7
G7
D.S., 2 times
(take repeats)
3.
Cma7
Ab7
Outro
G
Gsus
G
Gsus
G
Gsus
G7
C

Bossa Nova

One of Brazil's recognizable and popular song forms is the *bossa nova*. Brazilian composer Antonio Carlos Jobim, along with guitarist Joao Gilberto, wrote and recorded some of the most famous bossa novas.

Because of the harmonic sophistication and beautiful lyrics, many of these songs (such as "Girl From Ipanema") became popular with American jazz musicians. The bossa nova is usually played at a *slow to medium tempo and felt in four (counting each quarter note of the measure)—unlike the samba*, which is faster and felt in two (counting half notes).

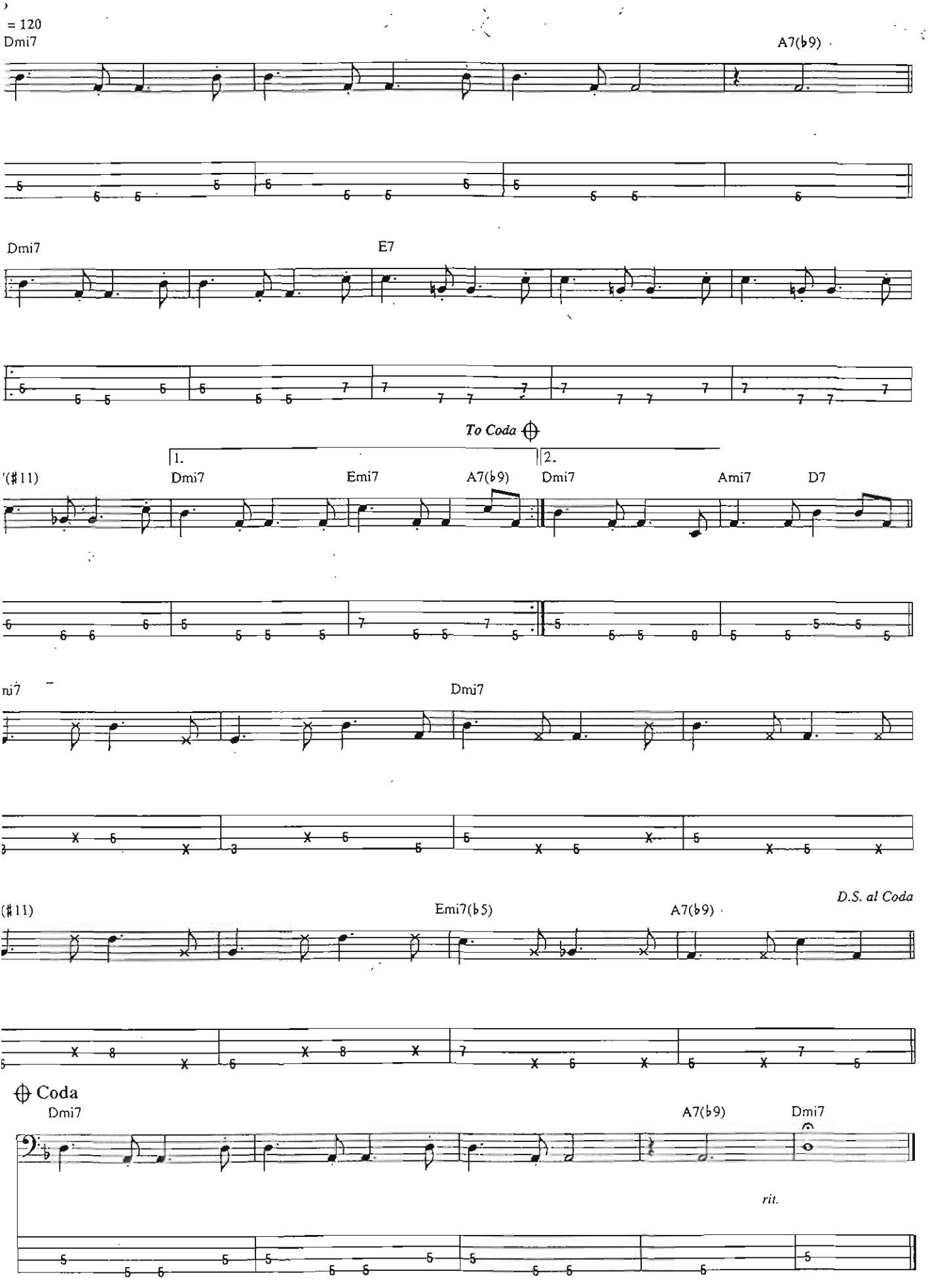




Suggested Listening:

Antonio Carlos Jobim
Sergio Mendez

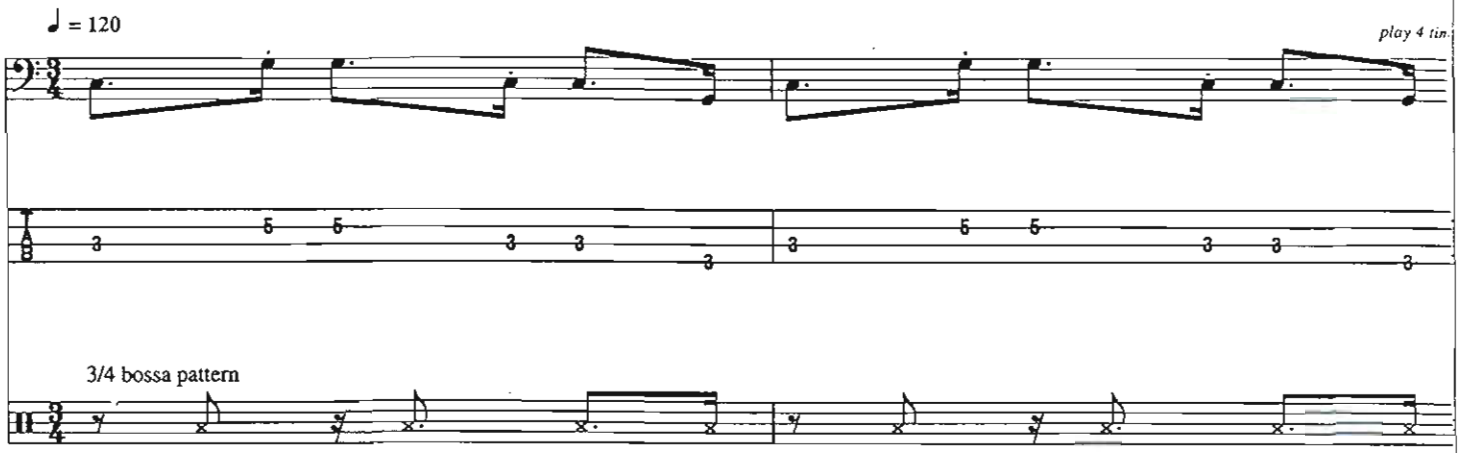
35 36 Song no. 8



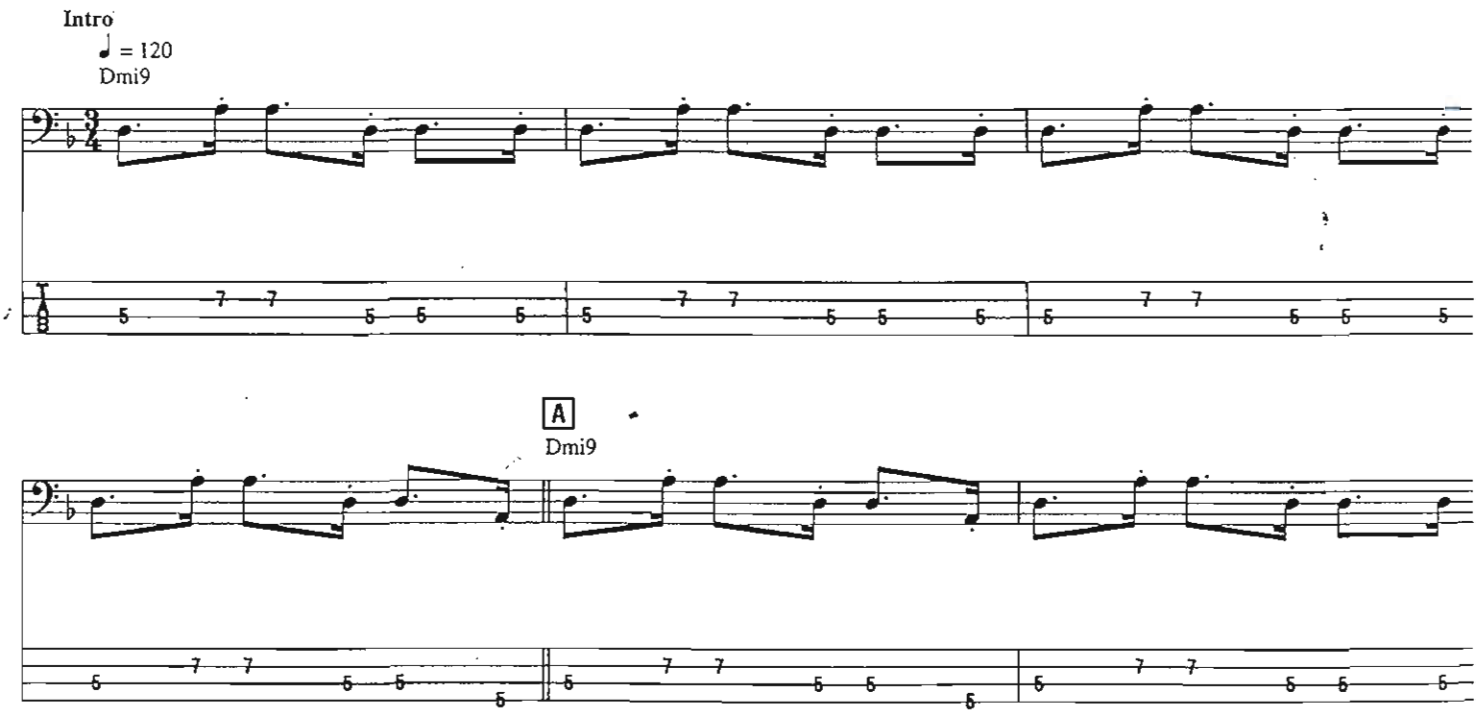
3/4 Bossa Nova

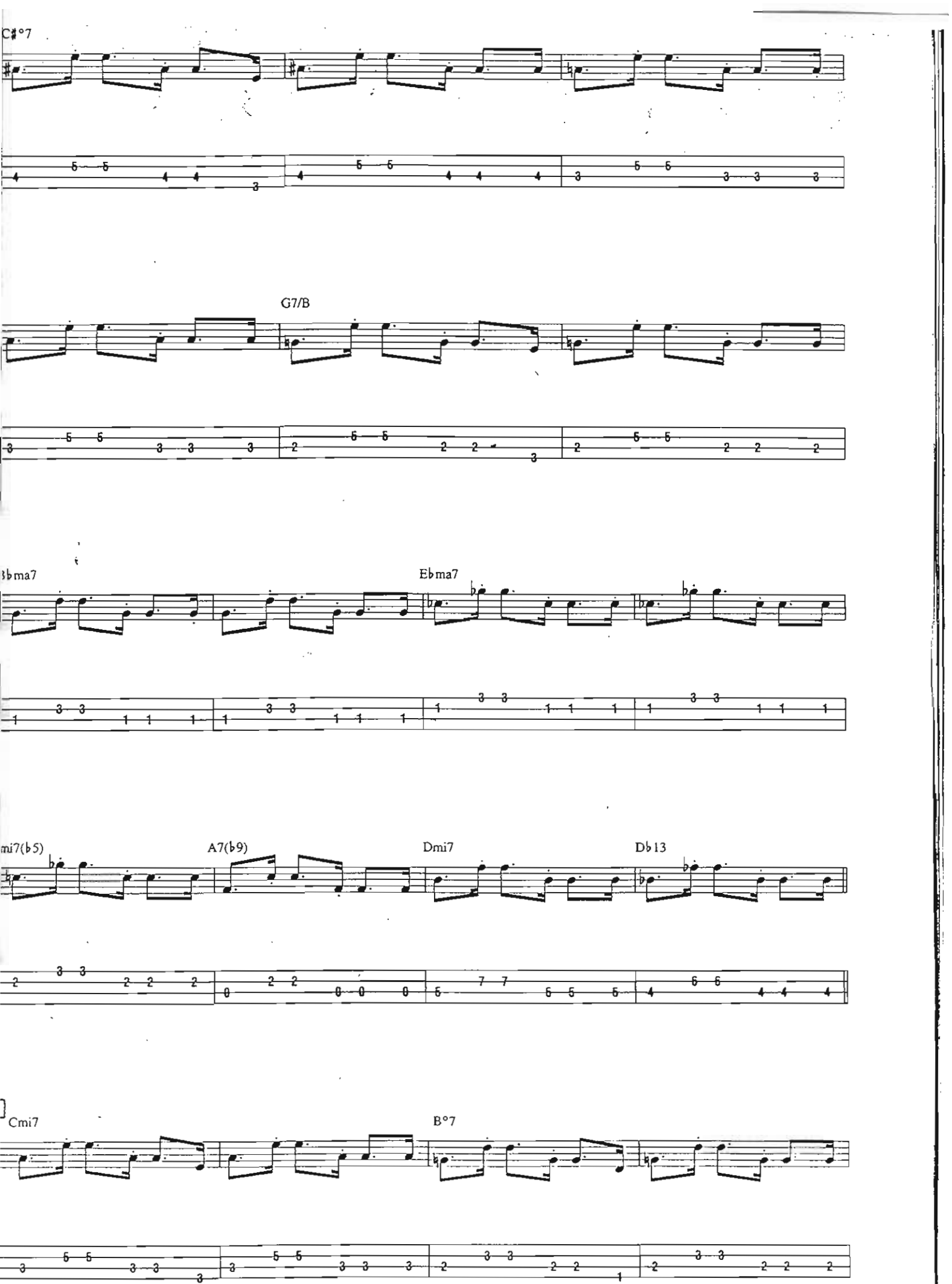
Although it is slow in tempo, this "odd time" bossa nova is difficult to feel at first. It may take repeated practice to become comfortable with this one.

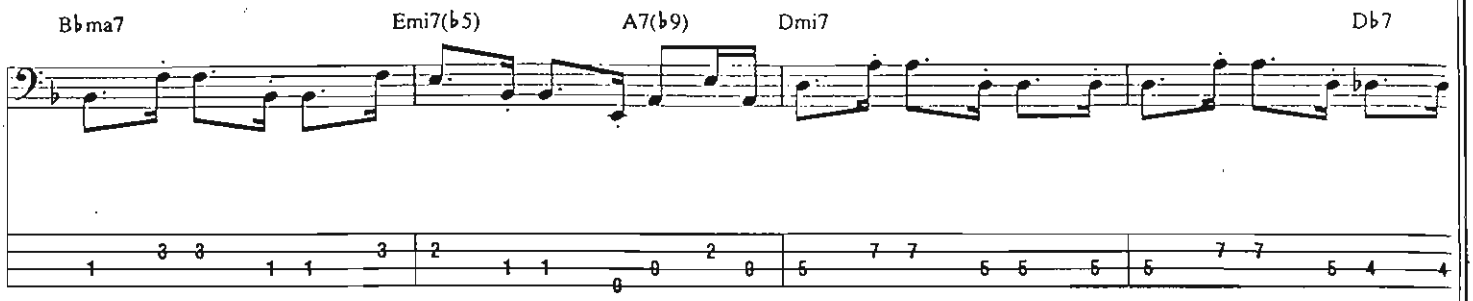
37 38

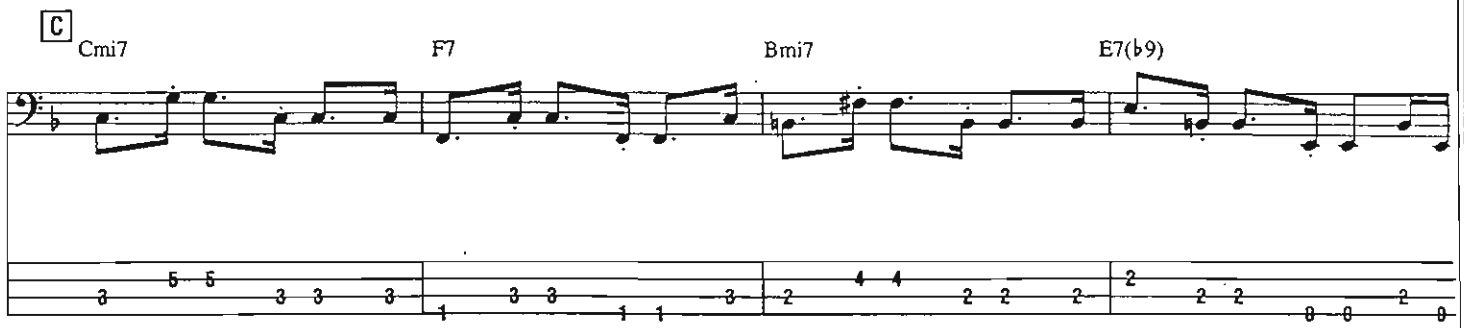


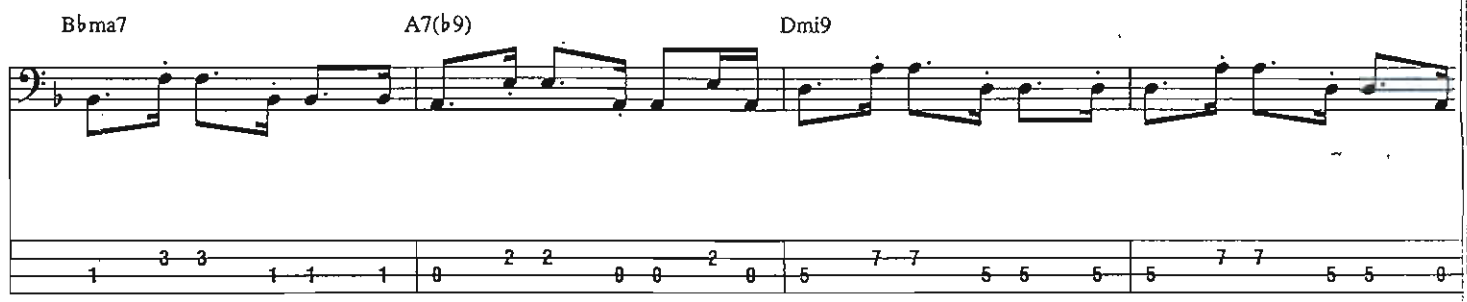
39 40 Song no. 9

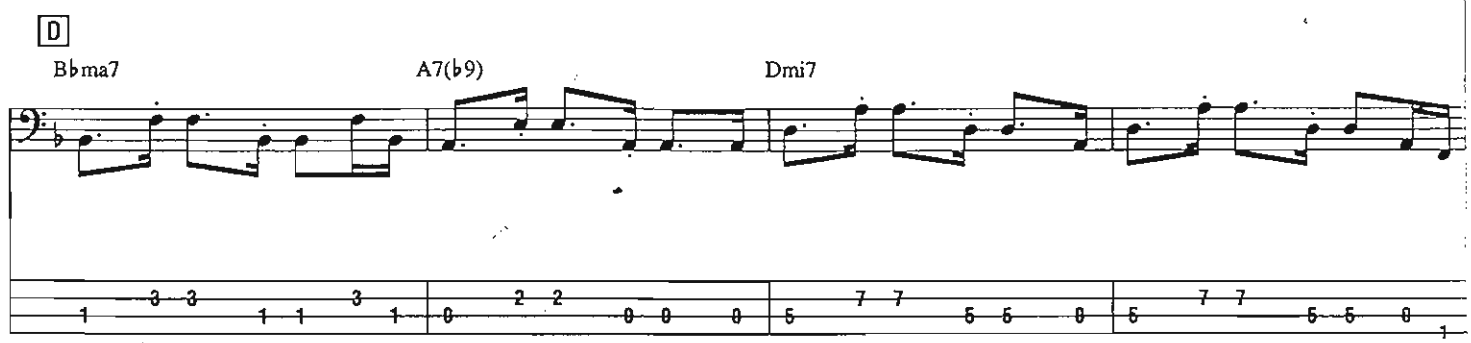


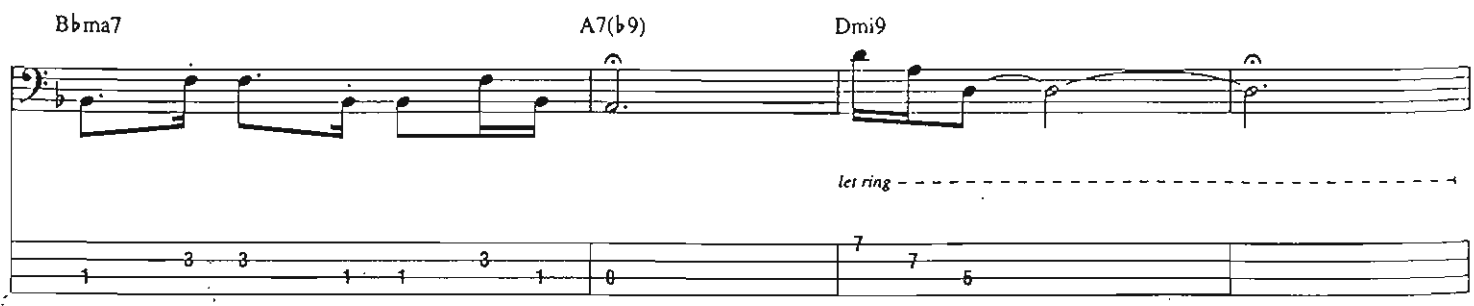

C♯°7
G7/B
3♭ma7
E♭ma7
mi7(♭5)
A7(♭9)
Dmi7
D♭13
Cmi7
B°7


B♭ma7
Emi7(♭5)
A7(♭9)
Dmi7
D♭7


C
Cmi7
F7
Bmi7
E7(♭9)


B♭ma7
A7(♭9)
Dmi9

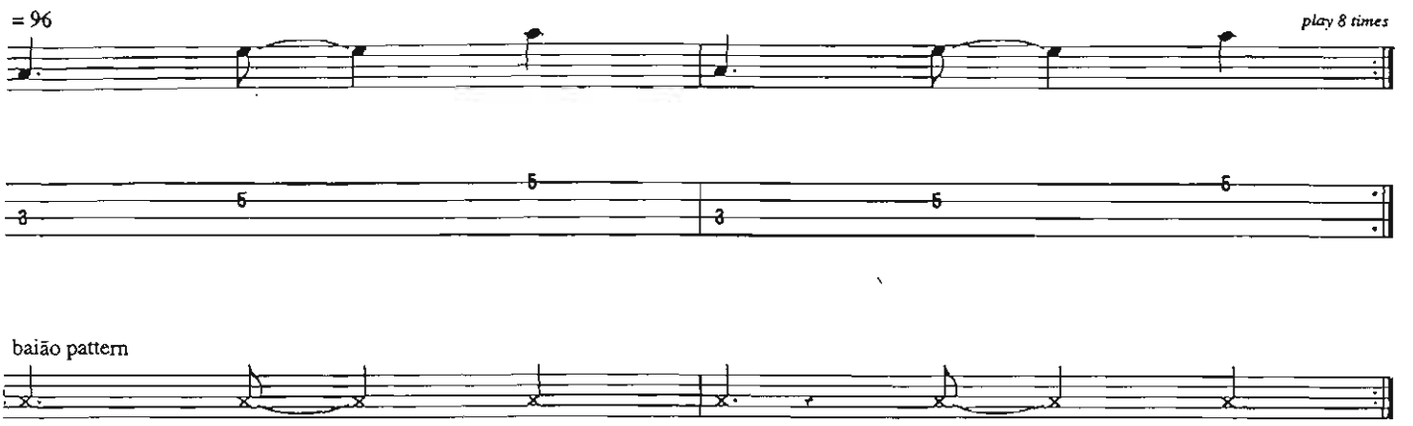

D
B♭ma7
A7(♭9)
Dmi7


B♭ma7
A7(♭9)
Dmi9
let ring

Baião

Coming from the northeastern section of Brazil, the *baião* is a type of folk or country music that started from a folk dance around the 1940s. It has been compared to the Zydeco style of Louisiana. For the purposes of this book, modern harmonies have been used to demonstrate this feel.

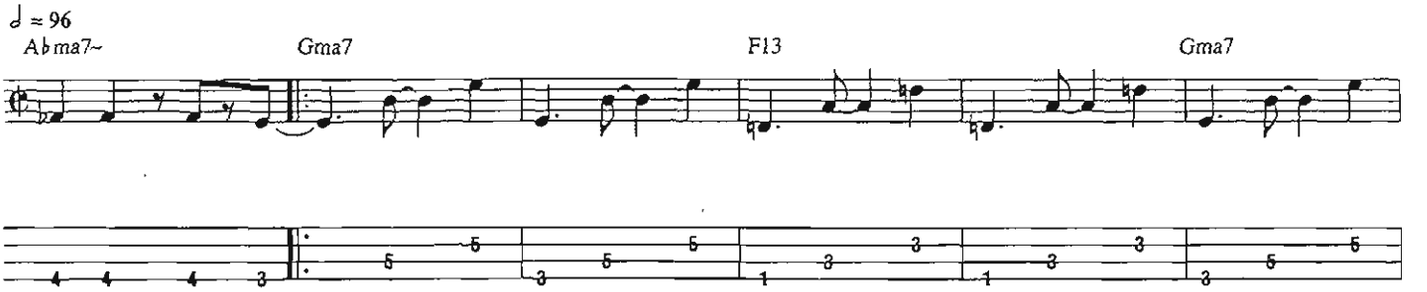
42

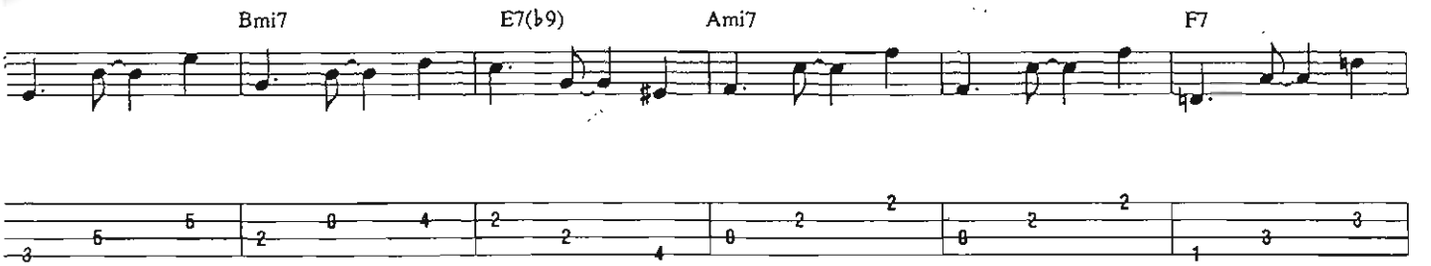


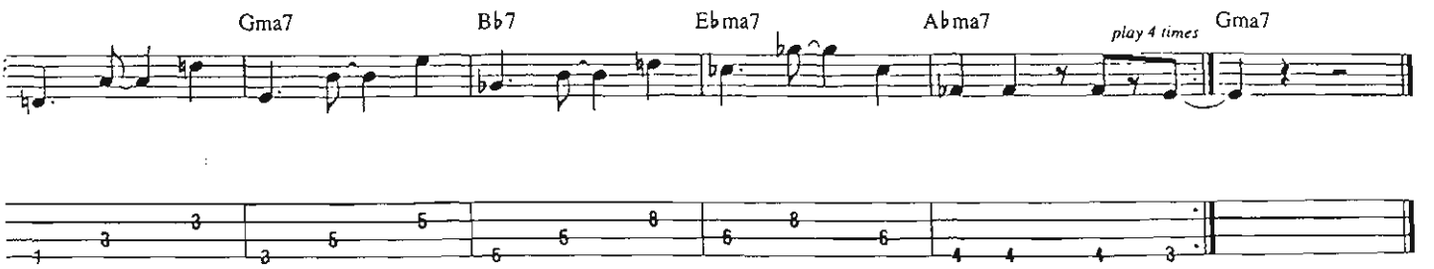
Suggested Listening:

Luiz Gonzaga
Humberto Teixeira

43 44 Song no. 10



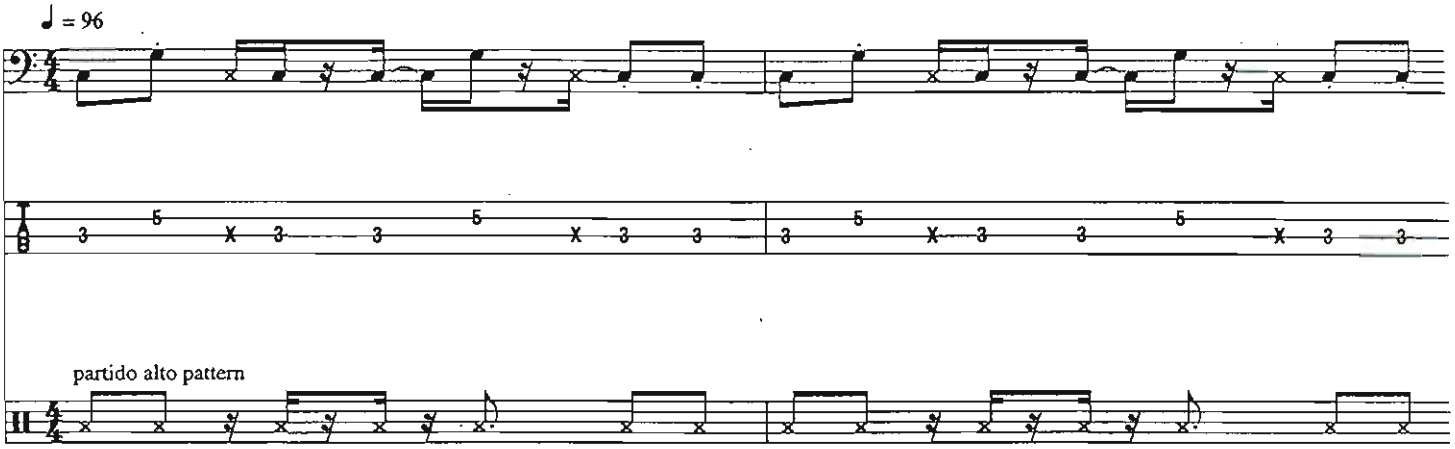




Partido Alto

Partido alto is another form of samba from Brazil. It is often referred to as the "urban samba." This style of samba is very funky; check out the syncopated bass line, and you will understand why. Try slap bass on this groove, but keep the rhythms consistent with the partido alto feel.

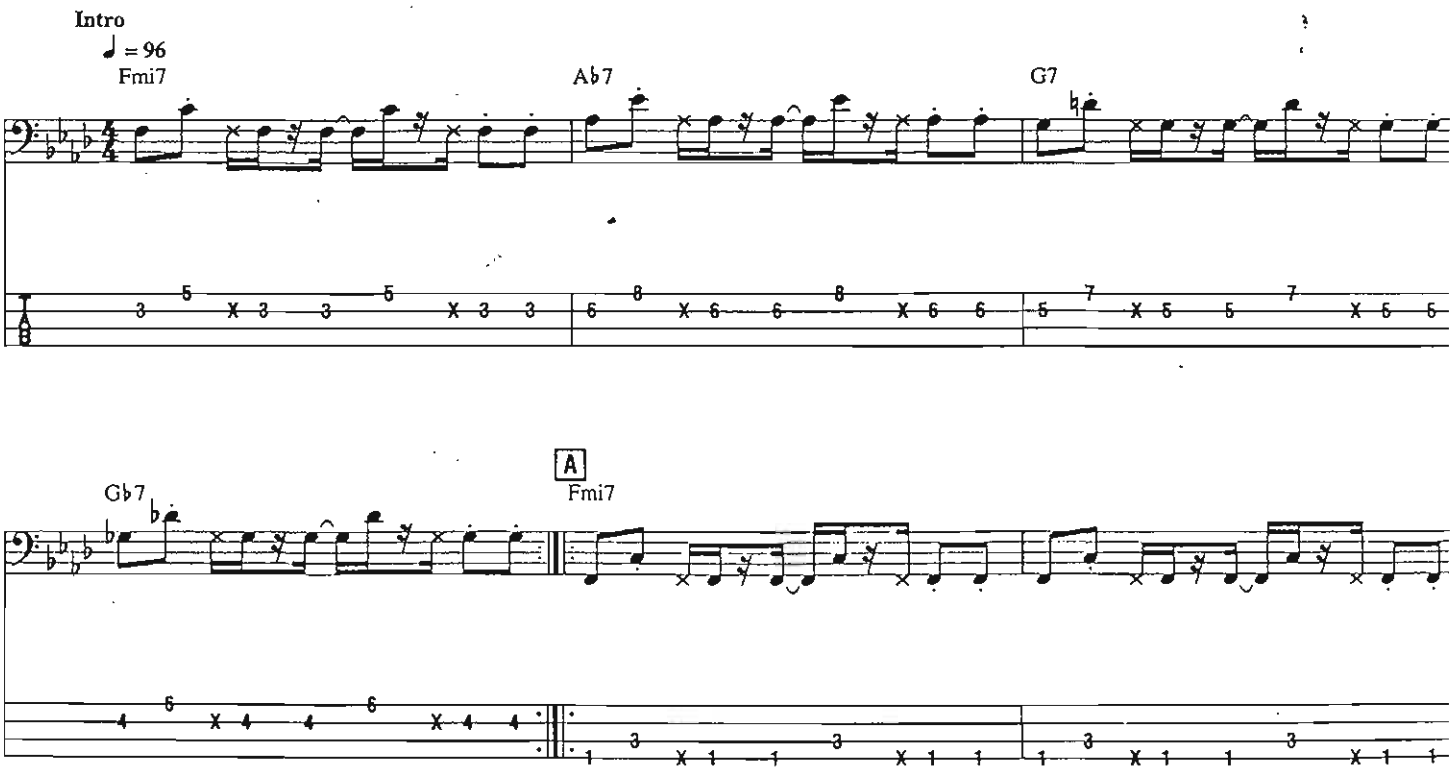
45 46

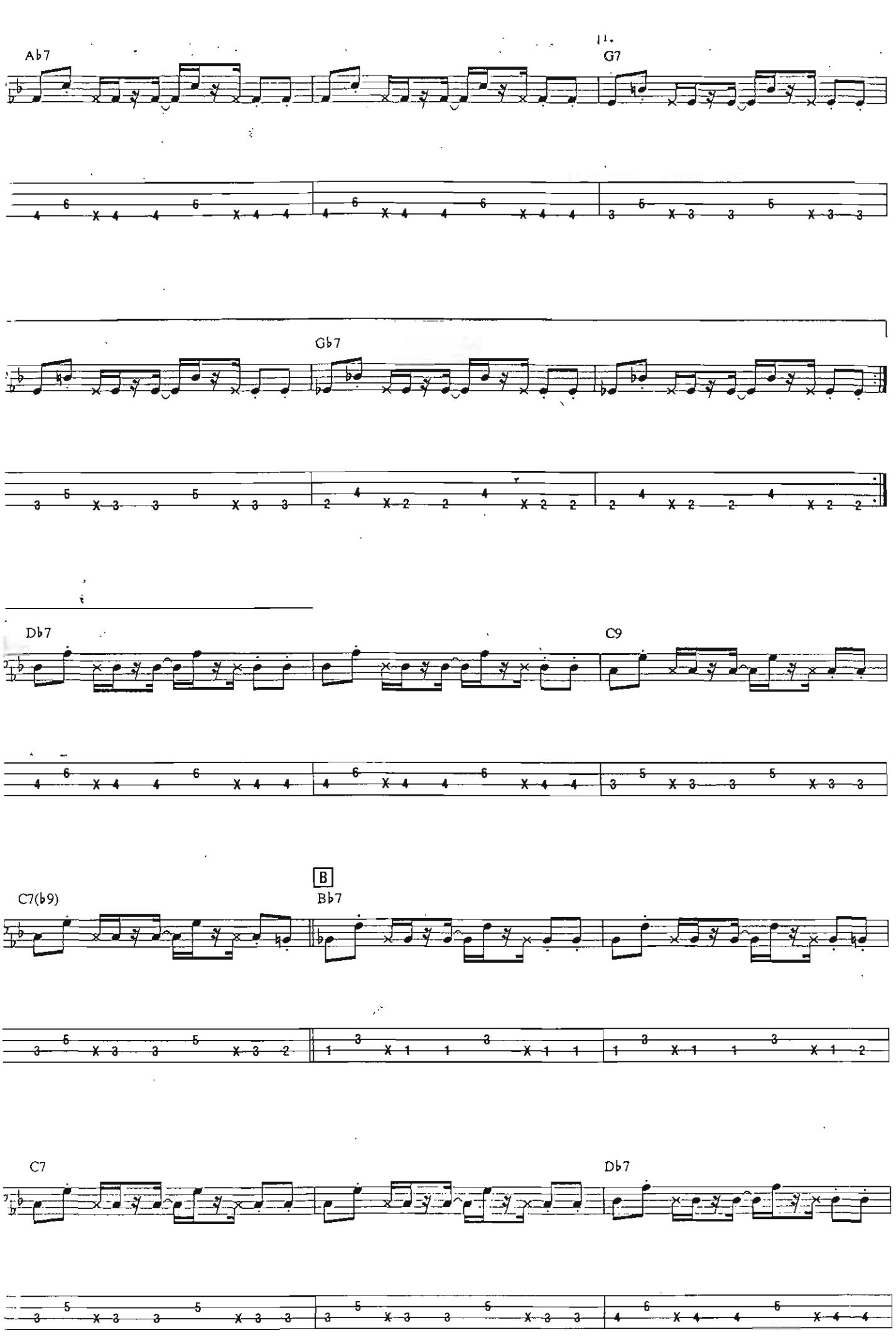


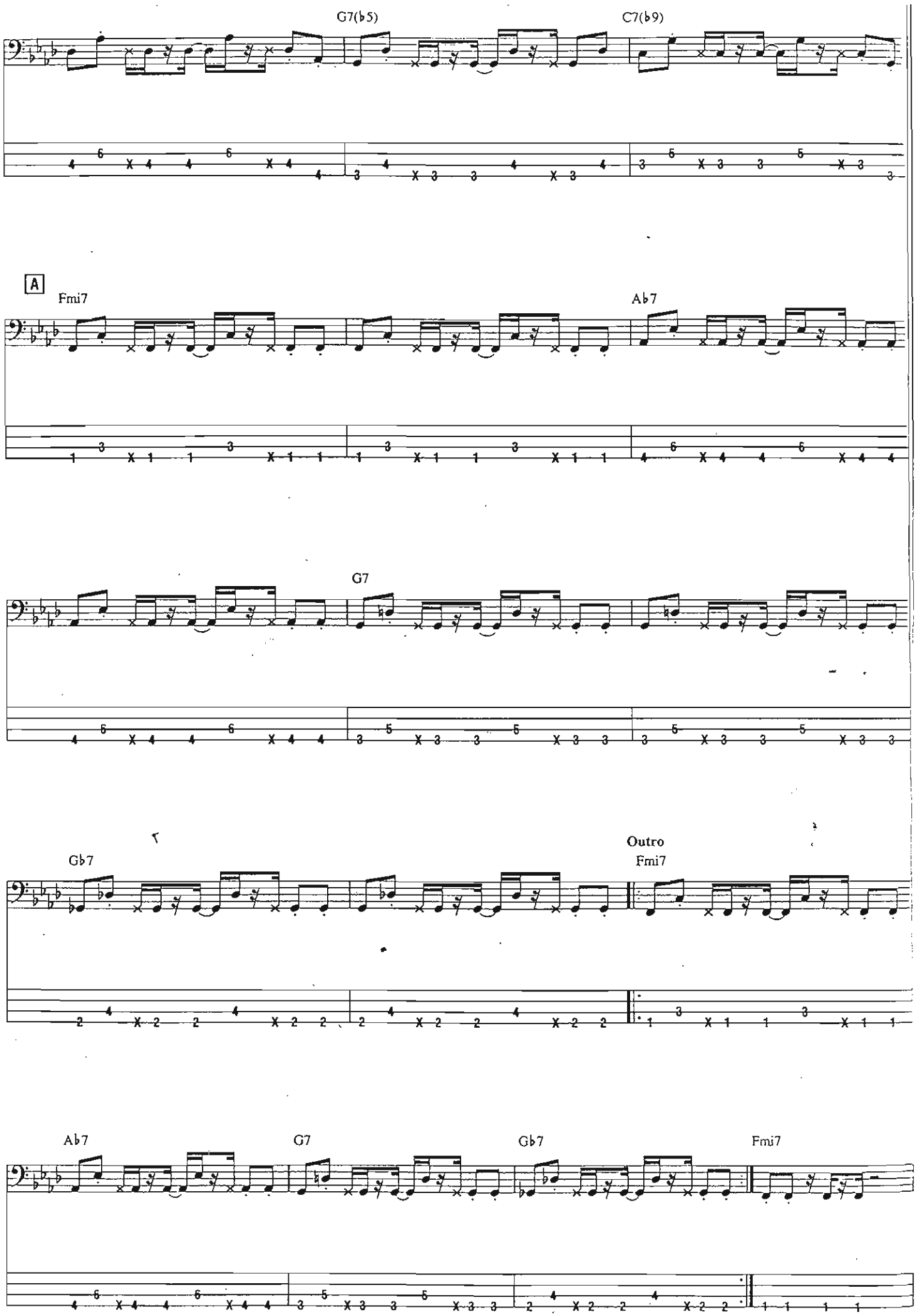
Suggested Listening:

Joao Bosco
Joao Nogueira

47 48 Song no. 11




Ab7
G7
Gb7
Db7
C9
B
C7(b9)
Bb7
C7
Db7


G7(♭5)
C7(♭9)
A
Fmi7
A♭7
G7
G♭7
Outro
Fmi7
A♭7
G7
G♭7
Fmi7

IVATE LESSONS

Latin Bass

by George Lopez
& David Keif

Cover Photo by Peter Amft

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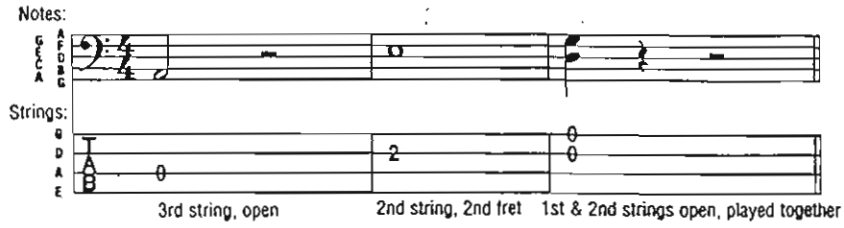
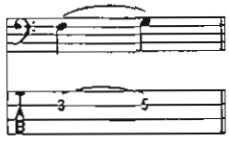
TABLATURE graphically represents the bass fingerboard. Each horizontal line represents a string, and each number represents a fret.

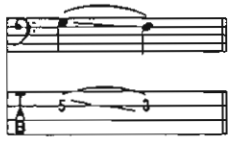


HAMMER-ON: Strike the first (lower) note with one finger, then sound the higher note (on the same string) with another finger by fretting it without picking.

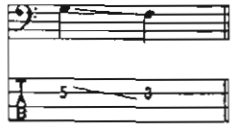


PULL-OFF: Place both fingers on the notes to be sounded. Strike the first note and without picking, pull the finger off to sound the second (lower) note.

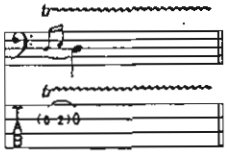
LEGATO SLIDE: Strike the first note and then slide the same fret-hand finger up or down to the second note. The second note is not struck.



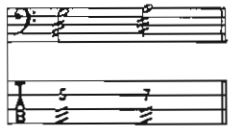
SHIFT SLIDE: Same as legato slide, except the second note is struck.



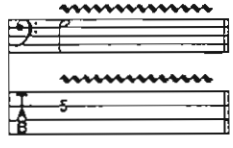
TRILL: Very rapidly alternate between the notes indicated by continuously hammering on and pulling off.



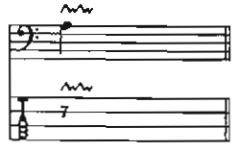
TREMOLO PICKING: The note is picked as rapidly and continuously as possible.



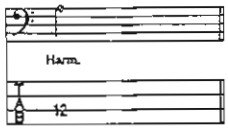
VIBRATO: The string is vibrated by rapidly bending and releasing the note with the fretting hand.



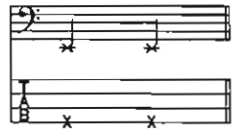
SHAKE: Using one finger, rapidly alternate between two notes on one string by sliding either a half-step above or below.



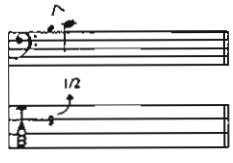
NATURAL HARMONIC: Strike the note while the fret hand lightly touches the string directly over the fret indicated.



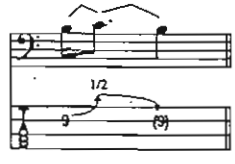
MUFFLED STRINGS: A percussive sound is produced by laying the fret hand across the string(s) without depressing them and striking them with the pick hand.



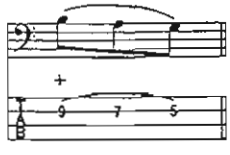
BEND: Strike the note and bend up the interval shown.



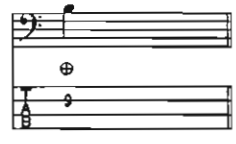
BEND AND RELEASE: Strike the note and bend up as indicated, then release back to the original note. Only the first note is struck.



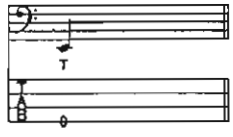
RIGHT-HAND TAP: Hammer ("tap") the fret indicated with the "pick-hand" index or middle finger and pull off to the note fretted by the fret hand.



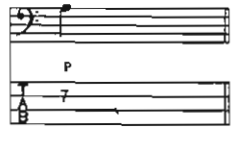
LEFT-HAND TAP: Hammer ("tap") the fret indicated with the "fret-hand" index or middle finger.



SLAP: Strike ("slap") string with right-hand thumb.



POP: Snap ("pop") string with right-hand index or middle finger.



(accent) • Accentuate note (play it louder)

(accent) • Accentuate note with great intensity

(staccato) • Play the note short

⊓ • Downstroke

V • Upstroke

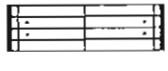
D.S. al Coda • Go back to the sign (𝄋), then play until the measure marked "*To Coda*," then skip to the section labelled "*Coda*."

D.C. al Fine • Go back to the beginning of the song and play until the measure marked "*Fine*" (end).

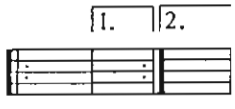
Bass Fig. • Label used to recall a recurring pattern.

Fill • Label used to identify a brief pattern which is to be inserted into the arrangement.

tacet • Instrument is silent (drops out).



• Repeat measures between signs.



• When a repeated section has different endings, play the first ending only the first time and the second ending only the second time.

NOTE: Tablature numbers in parentheses mean:
1. The note is being sustained over a system (note in standard notation is tied), or
2. The note is sustained, but a new articulation (such as a hammer-on, pull-off, slide or vibrato begins, or
3. The note is a barely audible "ghost" note (note in standard notation is also in parentheses).

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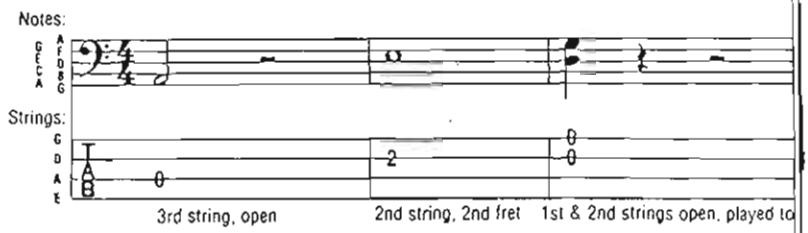

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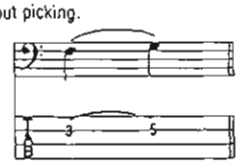

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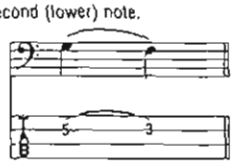

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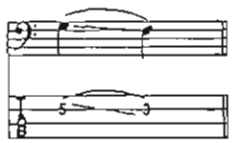

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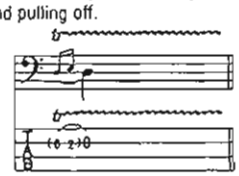

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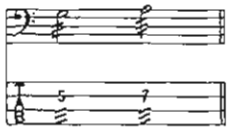

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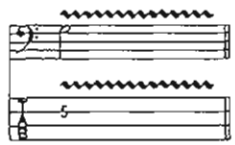

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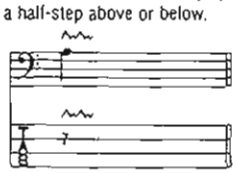

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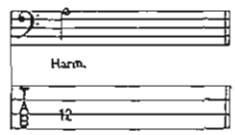

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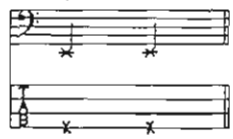
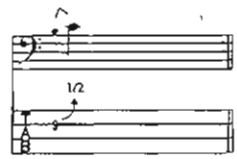
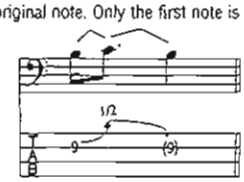


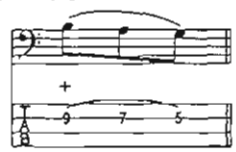
BEND: Strike the note and bend up the interval shown.



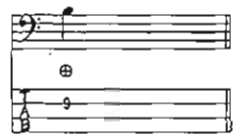
BEND AND RELEASE: Strike the note and bend up as indicated, then release back to the original note. Only the first note is stru



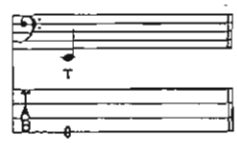
RIGHT-HAND TAP: Hammer ("tap") the fret indicated with the "pick-hand" index or middle finger and pull off to the note fretted by the fret hand.



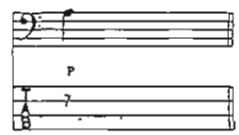
LEFT-HAND TAP: Hammer ("tap") the fret indicated with the "fret-hand" index or middle finger.



SLAP: Strike ("slap") string with right-hand thumb.



POP: Snap ("pop") string with right-hand index or middle finger.



(accent) • Accentuate note (play it louder)

(accent) • Accentuate note with great intensity

(staccato) • Play the note short

⊓ • Downstroke

V • Upstroke

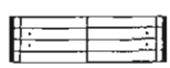
D.S. al Coda • Go back to the sign (𝄋), then play until the measure marked "*To Coda*," then skip to the section labelled "*Coda*."

D.C. al Fine • Go back to the beginning of the song and play until the measure marked "*Fine*" (end).

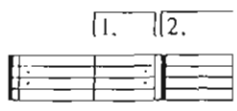
Bass Fig. • Label used to recall a recurring pattern.

Fill • Label used to identify a brief pattern which is to be inserted into the arrangement.

tacet • Instrument is silent (drops out).



• Repeat measures between signs.



• When a repeated section has different endings, play the first ending only the first time and the second ending only the second time.

NOTE: Tablature numbers in parentheses mean:
1. The note is being sustained over a system (note in standard notation is tied), or
2. The note is sustained, but a new articulation (such as a hammer-on, pull-off, slide or vibrato begins, or
3. The note is a barely audible "ghost" note (note in standard notation is also in parentheses).

About the Authors

George Lopez is one of the most in-demand bass players in the Latin music scene in Los Angeles. He has worked with Tito Puente, Celia Cruz, Poncho Sanchez, El Chicano, and many others.

David Keif is a successful freelance bass player working in Los Angeles. He is the author of *Arpeggios for Bass* and *Grooves for Electric Bass,* both available from Hal Leonard Corporation.

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Keyboards and rhythm programming by Carlos Campos.
All bass parts played by George Lopez.

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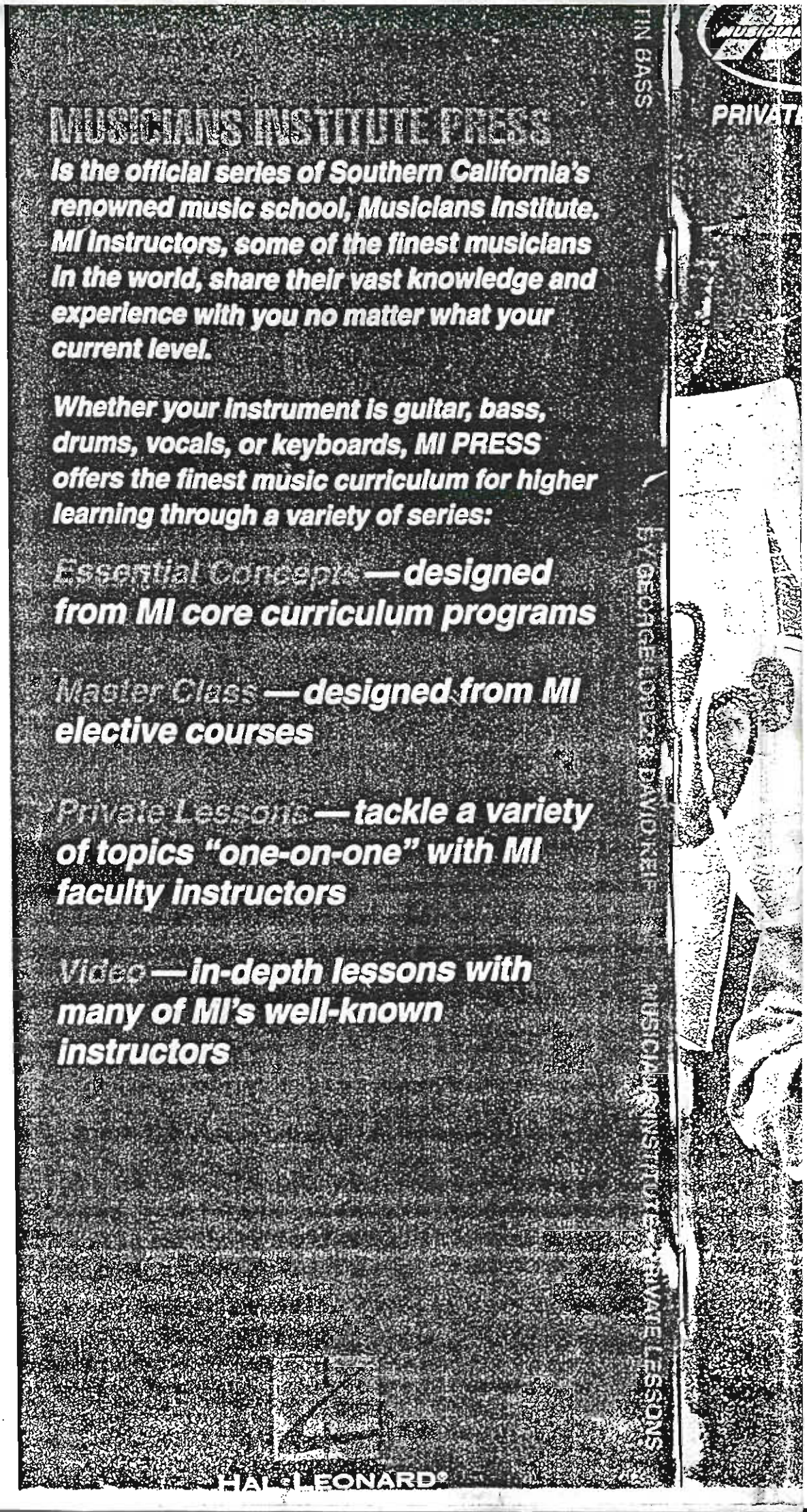
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